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PlayStation®
The Official Magazine

Issue 051 November 2011

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 51 (November 2011)

EARLY INTEL
MW3 MAPS and TIPS

SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD
Outrageous Professor Genki tour!

10 PS3 GAMES
That dare to be different

DOMINATE ON DAY ONE

MODERN WARFARE 3

New strategies, new tactics, new info straight from the **Call of Duty** team

+

- WWE 12
- Dead Island
- Resistance 3
- Madden NFL 12
- Lollipop Chainsaw
- Ridge Racer

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SKYRIM

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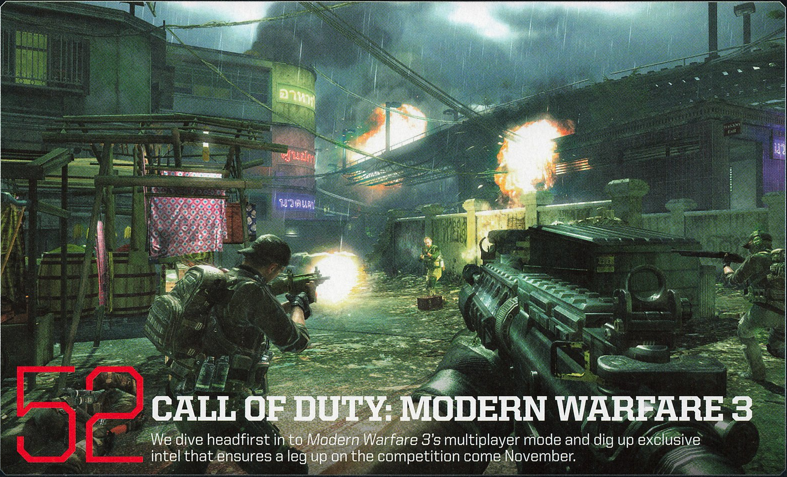
NOVEMBER 2011

COVER FEATURE



52 CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3

We dive headfirst in to *Modern Warfare 3's* multiplayer mode and dig up exclusive intel that ensures a leg up on the competition come November.

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Resistance 3
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future
RIDGE RACER BORDERLANDS
WWE 12 LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

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Volition's new *Saints* title has a button dedicated to nutshots. Need we say more?

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28 WWE '12

THQ aims to give its wrestling franchise a fresh start with a new game engine and refined control scheme. *WWE '12* is shaping up to be the most feature-rich wrestling game to date.

82 DEAD ISLAND

We survive the zombie apocalypse with naught but a few knives and busted boat oars.

Changes

The PTOM universe is expanding

Things are different now. And I'm not talking about the fact that my picture moved north a few inches from last month's issue. Our illustrious leader, Gary Steinman, has moved on to conquer some flash-in-the-pan thing called the Internet at GamesRadar.com. Since GR is part of the Future US media family, we still get to see—and hear—Gary on a near daily basis, but it's a period of change and transition for the PTOM team.

But change can be a good thing, and you can see that evidenced at the bottom of this very page. If you haven't visited our Facebook page or followed our Twitter feeds recently, I encourage you to do so. You'll find a flurry of new activity with frequent posts about the mag and anything-and-everything related to the PlayStation universe, as well as weekly giveaways to those who visit and engage with us through social media.

We've also started our own YouTube video channel where you can get fresh insight and impressions from PTOM editors on upcoming games we've had the opportunity to sample.

As you can see below, we're also implementing the use of QR codes in the magazine. Those of you with QR scanner apps on your computers and smartphones can now quickly and easily access our new video content directly from these printed pages.

Why the changes? Frankly, it's not because we expect to take on the big boys of online gaming sites with our new content; we're still a monthly magazine at our core. But these new mediums offer something that print just doesn't allow us to do quickly or elegantly: an opportunity to speak and interact with you, our readers. So take the opportunity to let us know what you're playing, thinking, feeling. We'd love to hear from you.

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor
twitter.com/RogerPTOM

Ken Bousquet
Art Director
twitter.com/ArtKenPTOM
Ken Bousquet has won every game of Guess Who he has ever played. Ever tried to tell him a "knock knock" joke? Don't bother—he already knows who's there.

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor
twitter.com/ScottPTOM
As a world-renowned cryptozoologist, Scott Butterworth's research has led to the discovery of the invisible unicorn, earning the accolades of many LARPers.

Ryan Taljonick
Assistant Editor
twitter.com/RyanTaljonick
Ryan Taljonick recently turned to a life of crime, running an illegal chain of unlicensed cat fashion shows. His whereabouts are currently unknown...except on weekdays.

Anne Lewis
Editorial Intern
twitter.com/BDRAnneLewis
Superintern Anne Lewis was told she could be whatever she wanted to be. Unfortunately, she only ever wanted to be a Super Saiyan, and her power level is nowhere near 9,000.

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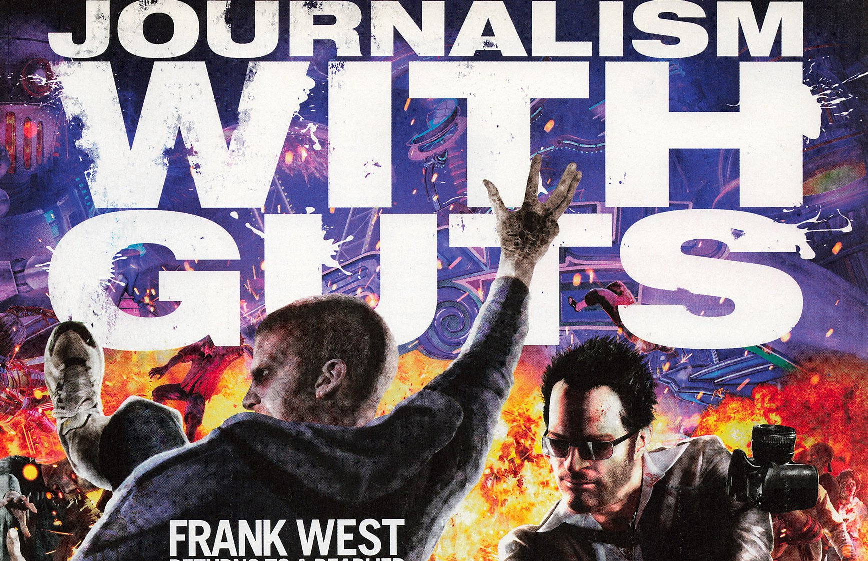
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Inside Qore Episode 42

Here Be Dragons

Sharpen your steel and defend the lands in *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. Returning to Bethesda's mammoth RPG world, you'll have to fight back dragons to complete your quest. Lead dragon slayer, Todd Howard, details the experience. In another classic setting, wrap up loose ends in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*, and continue the multiplayer mode from the last game. Return to the present with *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*; it feels more explosive than ever. And we talk with the tech wizards behind *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* to learn how they created the game.

VERONICA BELMONT HOST OF QORE

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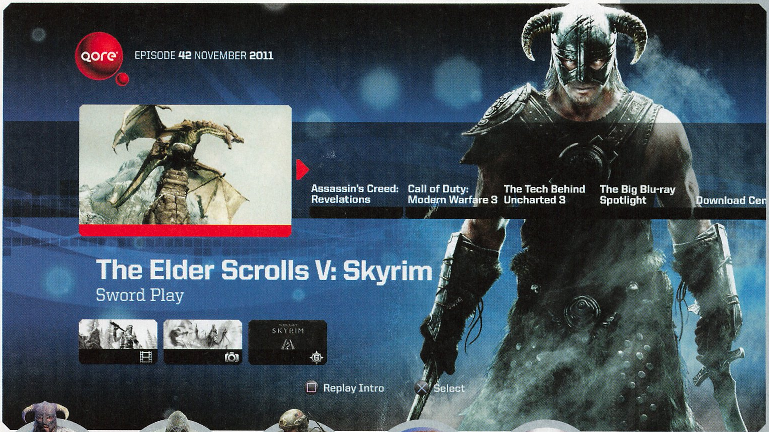
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The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
Fantasy never felt so real.

Assassin's Creed: Revelations
Finally unravel the plot twists.

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
It's so much better than impressionistic warfare.

The Tech Behind 3
Learn how Nathan Drake got his groove.

Blu-ray Spotlight
The Dude compels you to check out *The Big Lebowski*, finally on Blu-ray.

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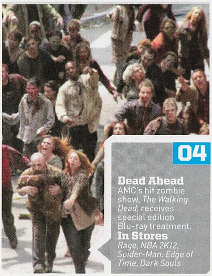
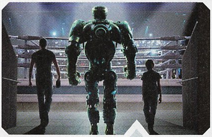




OCT. 01

Brick House
Sony launched the first consumer compact disc player (model CDP-101) on this day in 1982. It didn't quite fit in our pocket.

02

04

Dead Ahead
AMC's hit zombie show, *The Walking Dead*, receives special edition Blu-ray treatment.
In Stores
Rage, NBA 2K12, Spider-Man: Edge of Time, Dark Souls

05

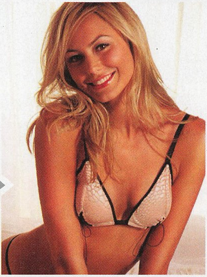
Hell of a B-Day
Writer and director Clive Barker (*Hellraiser*) was born on this day in 1952. Thanks for the nightmares, Clive.

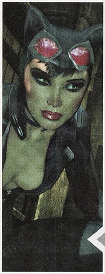
06

Red Storm Rising
On this date in 1977, the MiG-29 prototype makes its maiden flight. Sweet ride, though suspiciously similar to the American F-15.

07

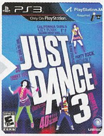
Roboplot
The Rock 'em Sock 'em Robot of movies, *Real Steal*, is in theaters today.





11

Get Down Tonight
Just Dance 3 arrives to make us shake our groove thing.
In Stores
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon, Rocksmith, Dead Rising 2: Off the Record, The Cursed Crusade



14

Stacy Keibler's Birthday
Hey, if she's good enough for George Clooney, she's good enough for us.

18

Knight Time
Batman: Arkham City lands. Join us in ogling Catwoman.
In Stores
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One, Everybody Dance, Medieval Moves, Carnival Island, The Sims 3: Pets

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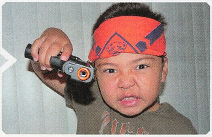
Evaluate Your Life Day
This is our least-favorite day as we're adults who spend our days playing videogames. Scratch that. This is our favorite day ever.



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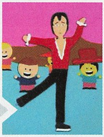
Happy B-day, Brian Boitano
Yes, the world would be a better place if we all stopped and asked, "What would Brian Boitano do?"



PS3
BATTLEFIELD 3
DICE

25

Love is a Battlefield
Battlefield 3 begins its offensive on the modern war genre.
In Stores
Silent Hill: Downpour, Family Game Night 4, King of Fighters XIII, Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Tenkaichi

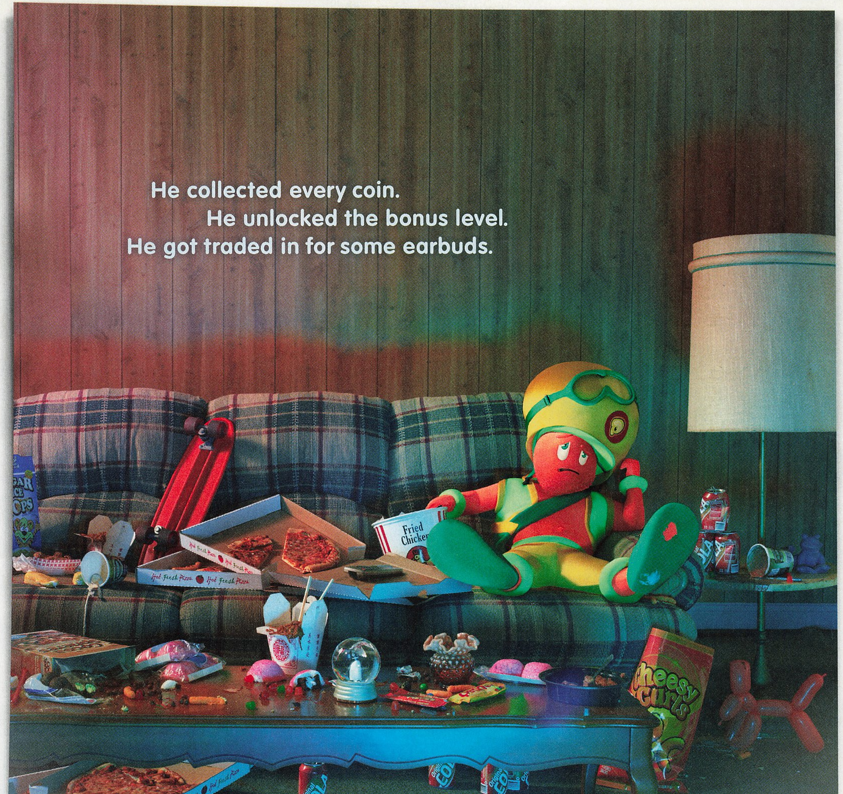
26

PS2's 11th Birthday
Eleven years since PS2's release and people are still buying games for the system. We call that longevity.

30/31

Halloween Weekend
This Halloween, due to our diets, we want money instead of candy. It's the only way we'll fit into our Power Ranger costumes.

* Release dates are subject to change by the publishers.


He collected every coin.
He unlocked the bonus level.
He got traded in for some earbuds.
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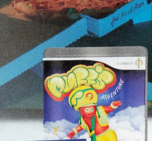
Hot Fresh Pizza
Original COLA
Cheesy Curls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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

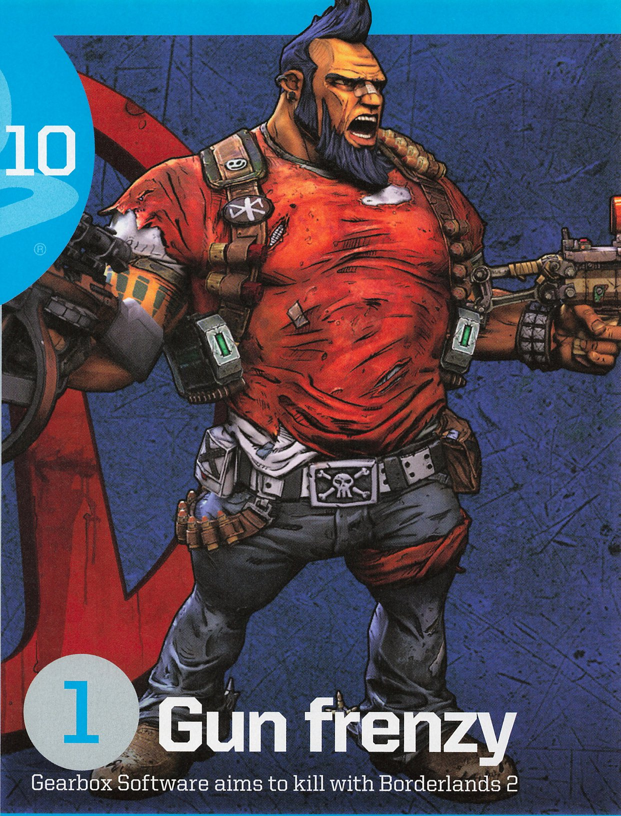
Bloody Fun
Cole MacGrath turns vampire in inFamous 2: Festival of Blood.
»Page 16

Round Robin
The Boy Wonder arrives as DLC in Batman: Arkham City.
»Page 18

Price Drop
With the PS3 price reduction, we've got some cash to burn.
»Page 20

Candy Girl
A cheerleader, her chainsaw, and her quest to...slay zombies?
»Page 24

The Great Debate
Is there hope for new game IPs? PTOM editors face the facts.
»Page 26



1

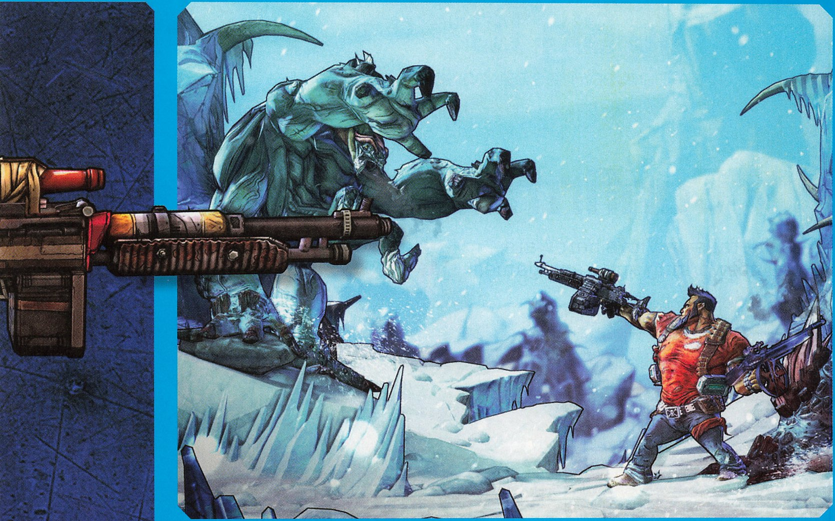
Gun frenzy

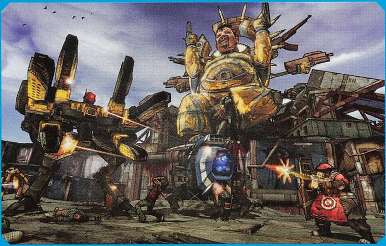
Gearbox Software aims to kill with Borderlands 2

Lusting over endless caches of death-dealing gadgetry made *Borderlands'* distinct, cel-shaded blend of first-person shooting and RPG loot-hoarding a sincerely sexy affair. So naturally, we're pumped to hear Gearbox Software is upping the stakes with a completely overhauled arsenal for the just-announced sequel, slated for a mid-2012 release. A wider array of weaponry with better differentiation between each firearm means even more loot to salivate over, but *Borderlands 2* has a lot more in store for us than a deluge of gun porn.

The return trip to Pandora's desert wasteland kicks off five years after the end of the first game with a no-goodnick named Handsome Jack now in control of the Hyperion Corporation. Double-crossed and left for dead, we're hell bent on gunning for Jack's head with help from a few familiar faces. Gearbox intends to better flesh out the game's story this time around and may even shed some light on the four original vault hunters, who will return as NPCs.

This leaves plenty of room for sweet, all-new playable character classes, the first of which is a doozy: The Gunzerker, a stumpy brute named





Giant killer robots and Yeti-like beasts that pick up hunks of debris and hurl them around are just a few of the saucy new foes on tap.

Salvador, can dual wield any weapon in the game regardless of its size or power. Yep, that includes rocket launchers and heavy machine guns, among other insidious armaments.

Mowing down the world's baddies should be more interesting too, thanks to smarter and crazier enemies. Giant killer robots and Yeti-like beasts that pick up hunks of debris and hurl them around are just a few of the saucy new foes on tap. There are also nomadic warriors sporting shields with raving psycho-midgets strapped to them. The poor souls can be shot free (in which case, we gain an ally) or simply put out of their misery.

Aside from the more noticeable game-changing updates, many of *Borderlands 2's* planned tweaks aim to fine tune and beef up the formula. Character skill-trees, for example, will be more elaborate and include special abilities with functions that go beyond mere stat enhancements. Class mods and artifacts return but with a larger focus on changing up the gameplay and rounding out subclasses. Enemy animations and A.I. have also been retooled to offer a more challenging and realistic combat experience.

One crucial component that remains unconfirmed, however, is the seamless drop-in/drop-out four-player co-op that made the original *Borderlands* such a treat to play. While the studio isn't sharing specifics on its plans for co-op updates just yet (other than the fact that it'll be ironing out a few kinks), expect co-op to return with a bang...or four.

Borderlands 2 is still early in development, but it seems Gearbox is taking player feedback to heart to make our next wild romp through Pandora a memorable one.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

2

Confirmed

Fresh details on Vita's hardware, social networking apps, and games

Technophiles, brace yourselves. Sony has revealed a load of new information about PlayStation Vita, and the numbers are looking mighty fine. With 512MB of RAM and 128MB of V-RAM, the Vita carries more total system memory than the PS3, which will allow the new handheld to tackle some long-anticipated features—like cross-game chat and Skype support—that never quite surfaced on other PlayStation platforms.

It also means developers will have more resources available to push out massively polished portable experiences that potentially stand up to anything we've seen on a home console. Here's a breakdown of the latest hardware and software features revealed for Vita—which is slated for a U.S. launch early next year—as well as a few of the massive franchises and original creations that'll be coming its way in the future.

Party Up
Sony's Party functionality will leverage the increased RAM to allow for cross-game voice chat and text message swapping with other Vita users.

Also Coming

- *Asphalt* (Ubisoft)
- *Dungeon Hunter Alliance* (Ubisoft)
- *FIFA* (EA Sports)
- *Mad Blocker HD* (Open Emotion)
- *Michael Jackson: The Experience* (Ubisoft)
- *Mutant Blobs Attack* (DrinkBox)
- *Rayman Origins* (Ubisoft)
- *Smart As...* (SCEA)

Newly Announced Games

Assassin's Creed | Ubisoft
Though Ubisoft remains tight-lipped on exactly what to expect, this brand new iteration should deliver the first truly immersive series experience on a handheld. It wouldn't surprise us to see the Vita game serve as a bridge between this fall's *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* and whatever's next on the horizon for the beloved series.

Resistance: Burning Skies | SCEA
Developed by Nihilistic Software (*PlayStation Move Heroes*), the latest handheld shooter spinoff features a traditional first-person perspective, putting players in the shoes of New York City firefighter Tom Riley prior to *Resistance 2's* events. Along with the familiar series firearms, Riley always has an axe at hand, and the touchscreen can be used to target enemies and toss grenades. Check out our preview on page 36 for more details.

Escape Plan | SCEA
This original monochromatic puzzler stars Lil and Laarg, a couple of awkward chums who must work together using their unique proportions to overcome trap-filled rooms. Both the touchscreen and rear panel come into play during these devious challenges, offering up a wide array of control options. Players will need to use them all to get these goofballs out alive.

Frobisher Says | Honeyslug
One of the strangest Vita games we've seen thus far is this bite-sized collection of minigames that only last a few seconds each and task players to use the various abilities of the device to play the diverse offerings. The colorful art style and its delightful sense of humor have us interested, but hopefully it'll arrive at a price befitting the quick-hit nature of its gameplay.

Lumines | Ubisoft
No details have been announced, but the mere prospect of a new *Lumines* game for Vita gets us all sort of excited. The original entries still rank among the best PSP titles ever, and the core rhythmic puzzle experience—in which matching like-colored blocks merges with thumping beats and ever-changing backdrops—should be even more tantalizing with the power of the Vita hardware.

PS VITA
SELECT
24
15

Choices
Unlike on PSP, Sony says every single Vita game available at retail will also be released on the PlayStation Store. Physical or digital editions—we decide.

Be Social
Free Twitter and Facebook apps from the PlayStation Store will make keeping up with friends much easier when not playing together.

Check In
Vita will also host a free Foursquare app, recreating the popular mobile experience that lets users check in to real-world locations and connect with buddies.

Catch Up
Sony's free Skype app will let users talk free with worldwide users on any other supported device, quite likely with video chat functionality as well.

In Control
Sony has confirmed that Vita will be able to function as a full-fledged PS3 controller, meaning devs could use its touchscreen and gyroscopic features in PS3 games.

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3 Blood feast

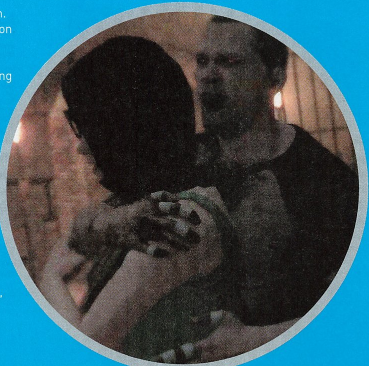
Get fanged and freaky with inFamous 2: Festival of Blood DLC

We're not quite sure what it is about the undead that makes people want to chop them into tiny bits and spew their rotten innards to the winds, but the glut of zombie games on the market must be making other monsters jealous for all the attention. Perhaps that's why Sucker Punch Productions has settled on another flavor of necromantic slaughter—vampires—for its upcoming, horror-themed *inFamous 2* DLC.

When bloodsuckers descend on the city of New Marais, electrically charged superhero Cole MacGrath gets bitten and winds up in a bit of a sticky spot. With just one night to hunt down and stake the head vampire before his new condition becomes permanent, MacGrath has his vampire-slaying work cut out for him. But will he give in to wicked temptation and gorge himself on a few innocent bystanders along the way?

With Cole's sudden affliction making him prone to ripping out throats in sprays of gore, we're more than a little curious to see how his newfound vampy side will factor into the gameplay, his supernatural abilities, and, of course, the morality system. From the looks of it, things are bound to get pretty messy.

Arriving just in time for Halloween, *Festival of Blood* serves as a standalone expansion—no game disc is necessary—and its added missions, eerie environments, and new characters promise plenty of chills and thrills.



PS3
PlayStation 3
PlayStation Network

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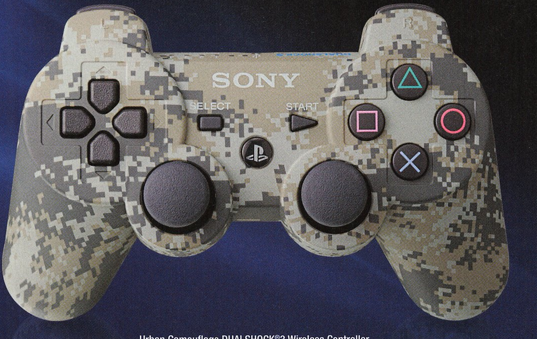
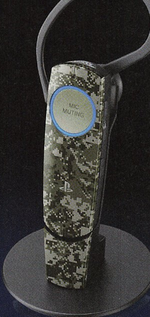


Urban Camouflage DUALSHOCK®3 Wireless Controller



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SONY
make.believe

4

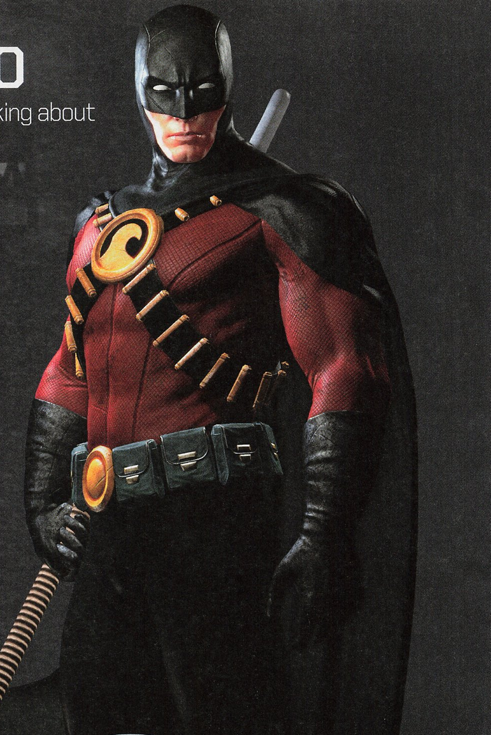
Dynamic sidekick

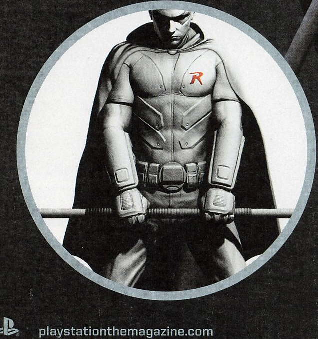
Robin makes a DLC appearance in *Batman: Arkham City*

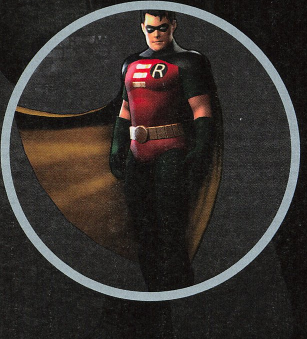
As if a playable Catwoman wasn't enough of a reason to get us riled up for *Batman: Arkham City*, Rocksteady Studios has announced that the Boy Wonder will be available as a DLC character. Initially available as a Best Buy-exclusive pre-order bonus (but eventually available as for-purchase DLC for everyone), the "Tim Drake Robin Pack" allows Batman fans to play as Robin in *Arkham City's* Challenge mode. Tim Drake comes with his own unique gadgets and special moves, and the pack also includes two additional Challenge maps: Black Mask Hideout and Freight Train Escape. We just hope we also get some classic Robin one-liners with the deal. But hey, we'll settle for Batman's beloved sidekick.

Suit Up

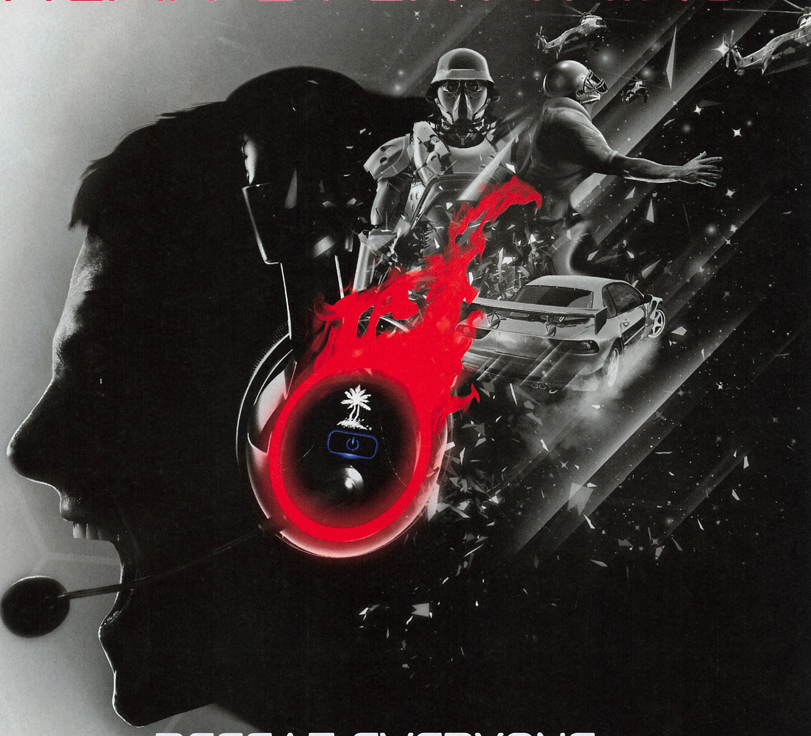
In addition to Robin's new default skin (below), the pack includes Tim Drake's Red Robin costume (right) as well as a vintage Dick Grayson costume from *Batman: The Animated Series* (bottom right).







HEAR EVERYTHING



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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

5

Money to burn

How to make the most of the PS3 price drop

Joining the proud ranks of PS3 owners recently became a fair bit cheaper thanks to a price cut that shaved a cool $50 off the price of both models of the system. Now, the entry-level 160GB system comes in at just $249, while the higher capacity 320GB model sells for $299. For prospective purchasers that had budgeted the previous amount for either PS3 system, it might be tempting to spend that extra $50 on something other than videogames—like food, rent, or other so-called "essentials." But we choose to see things differently: Why not use that cash to enhance the PlayStation experience out of the box?

Loud and Clear
Sony's official Wireless Stereo Headset for PS3 has launched, and this sleek wonder offers up virtual 7.1 surround sound—as well as a retractable microphone and on-screen status updates—for $100 flat. Sure, that's a bit more than what we saved, but think of it as a 50 percent discount.

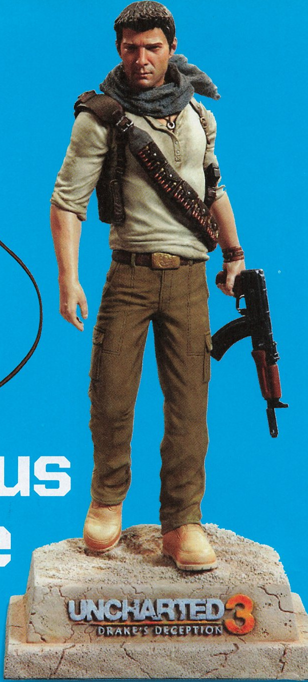
Watch Weekly
In addition to options like Netflix and Hulu Plus, Sony recently announced that it will offer a recurring weekly selection of film and TV episode rentals for 99 cents a pop ($1.99 for HD versions). With $50 leftover, PS3 owners can spread it out and catch a new flick every week for nearly a year.

Plus Sized
A full-year subscription to PlayStation Plus weighs in at $50 (how 'bout that!) and grants access to free games, exclusive pre-release multiplayer tests, full-game demos, automatic downloads, and numerous other perks. It's a completely optional PSN addition, but a value-packed one for sure.

Beat the Best
Sony's Greatest Hits line includes some of the most amazing PS3 experiences to date, including *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves, LittleBigPlanet, God of War III,* and *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*. At $30 or less apiece, don't hesitate to stock up on these proven favorites.

6

Bonus time



Collector's editions and pre-order bonuses for the biggest Holiday titles

Pre-Order Bonuses

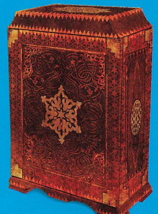
GAMESTOP
Creepy Crawler Kickback (multiplayer): Turn into a swarm of insects and other creatures to overpower enemies.

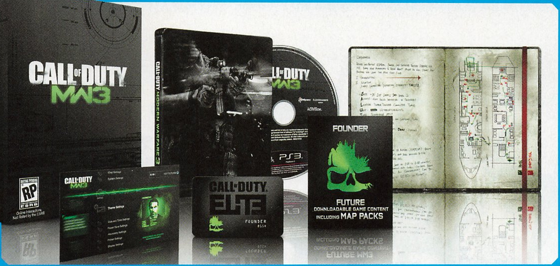
AMAZON
Carpet Bomb Kickback (multiplayer) : Toss out three grenades at a time and a clip-size mod for Para 9 and G-MAL guns.

BEST BUY
Regeneration Booster (multiplayer) : Speeds up the rate of wound recovery by 70 percent.

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception Collector's Edition | $100

Uncharted 3 gets some fancy treatment with special Traveling Chest packaging and a slick-looking SteelBook case. In the bundle are wearable replicas of Nathan Drake's buckle and ring (which comes on a necklace strap), and a statue of the leading man. Though there isn't much in the way of DLC, it's a great package for swag fans.




CALL OF DUTY MW3
FOUNDER
FUTURE DOWNLOADABLE GAME CONTENT INCLUDING MAP PACKS
CALL OF DUTY ELITE

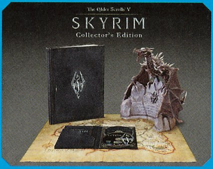
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 Hardened Edition | $80

Activision has made it a tradition to release Hardened and Prestige editions of its *Call of Duty* games. The Hardened Edition includes a steel case, a map book, an XMB theme, COD Elite membership, and future DLC and Map packs. The Prestige edition should run $150, but there's no confirmation yet on the price or its contents. We imagine that the Prestige version will include everything featured in the Hardened Edition along with a lustworthy premium item like *Modern Warfare 2's* fully funtional night vision googles or *Black Op's* radio-controlled RC-XD Video Surveillance Vehicle.

Pre-Order Bonuses

GAMESTOP
Two-sided poster with exclusive game info.

AMAZON
Modern Warfare 3 wallpaper download and $10 Amazon promo credit toward Turtle Beach *MW3* headset purchase.

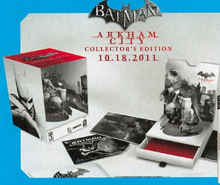

The Elder Scrolls V
SKYRIM
Collector's Edition

Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim Collector's Edition | $150

The *Skyrim* collector's edition is the priciest on our list and includes an official art book, a "Making of" DVD, and a statue of Alduin, the world-eating dragon. We do wonder if it's worth an extra $90(!), but that dragon figurine is awfully cool...

Pre-Order Bonuses

GAMESTOP, AMAZON, BEST BUY
All pre-orders include a premium cloth map of the realm.


BATMAN
ARKHAM CITY
COLLECTOR'S EDITION
10.18.2011

Batman: Arkham City Collector's Edition | $100

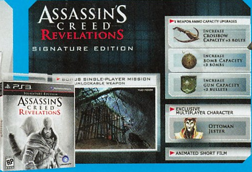
Arkham City gets a Batman statue, an art book, four collectible cards, and the *Batman: Gotham Knight* animated movie—and that's just the physical bonuses. There's also early access to the Iceberg Lounge Challenge map, a *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* skin, and a download for the *Batman: Arkham City* soundtrack album.

Pre-Order Bonuses

GAMESTOP
Joker's Carnival Challenge map

AMAZON
$10 in Amazon credit

BEST BUY
Downloadable Robin character and costumes


ASSASSIN'S CREED REVELATIONS
SIGNATURE EDITION
WEAPON AMMO CAPACITY UPGRADES
INCREASE CROSSBOW CAPACITY +5 BOLTS
INCREASE BOMB CAPACITY +3 BOMBS
INCREASE GUN CAPACITY +2 BULLETS
BONUS SINGLE-PLAYER MISSION
UNLOCKABLE WEAPON
EXCLUSIVE MULTIPLAYER CHARACTER
OTTOMAN JESTER
ANIMATED SHORT FILM

Assassin's Creed: Revelations Signature Edition | $60

This is an exclusive free upgrade for all GameStop pre-orders, which we think is a pretty good steal. It comes with a bonus single-player mission, an exclusive multiplayer character, weapon capacity upgrades, the game's original soundtrack, and the animated film, *Assassin's Creed Embers*.

Pre-Order Bonuses

GAMESTOP
Free upgrade to Signature Edition

AMAZON
No announced bonus

BEST BUY
The Crusader exclusive multiplayer character

UPPORT
ENGINEER
RECON

Battlefield 3 Limited Edition | $60

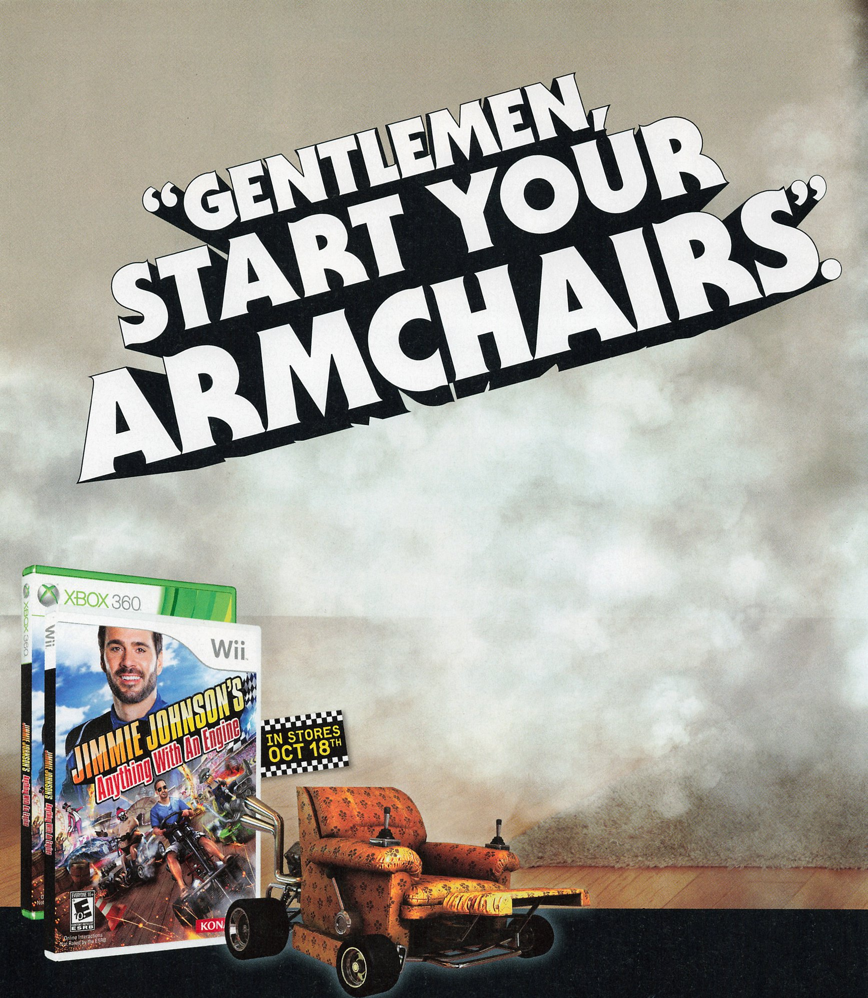
All pre-orders and day one purchases will automatically receive *Battlefield 3 Limited Edition*, which includes four maps from *Battlefield 2* recreated with Frostbite 2.0 engine graphics, classic *Battlefield 2* weapons and vehicles, and additional Trophies. Pre-orders will also receive a download for the Back to Karkand expansion.

Pre-Order Bonuses

GAMESTOP
Physical Warfare Pack containing weapons, upgrades, and ammo

AMAZON
Dog Tag Pack for multiplayer

BEST BUY
SPECACT Kit with a new multiplayer skin for each class and side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KONAMI
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E 10+
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Alcohol Reference
Crude Humor
Language
Mild Suggestive Themes
Mild Violence

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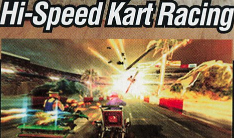
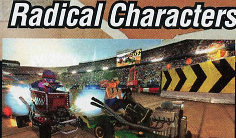
RACE ANYTHING

Hi-Speed Kart Racing



Radical Characters



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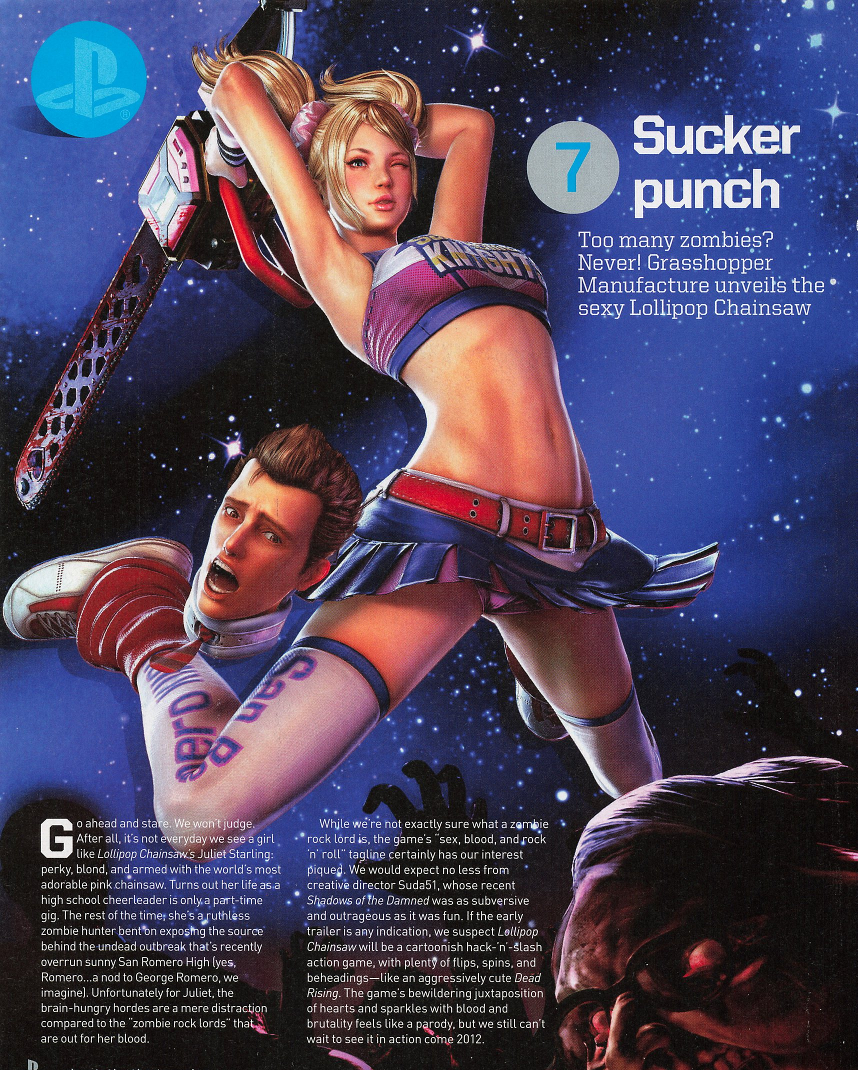
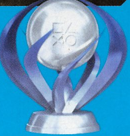


7 Sucker punch

Too many zombies? Never! Grasshopper Manufacture unveils the sexy Lollipop Chainsaw

Go ahead and stare. We won't judge. After all, it's not everyday we see a girl like *Lollipop Chainsaw's* Juliet Starling: perky, blond, and armed with the world's most adorable pink chainsaw. Turns out her life as a high school cheerleader is only a part-time gig. The rest of the time, she's a ruthless zombie hunter bent on exposing the source behind the undead outbreak that's recently overrun sunny San Romero High (yes, Romero...a nod to George Romero, we imagine). Unfortunately for Juliet, the brain-hungry hordes are a mere distraction compared to the "zombie rock lords" that are out for her blood.

While we're not exactly sure what a zombie rock lord is, the game's "sex, blood, and rock 'n' roll" tagline certainly has our interest piqued. We would expect no less from creative director Suda51, whose recent *Shadows of the Damned* was as subversive and outrageous as it was fun. If the early trailer is any indication, we suspect *Lollipop Chainsaw* will be a cartoonish hack-'n'-slash action game, with plenty of flips, spins, and beheadings—like an aggressively cute *Dead Rising*. The game's bewildering juxtaposition of hearts and sparkles with blood and brutality feels like a parody, but we still can't wait to see it in action come 2012.



8 Trophy top guns

Meet the world's best PS3 Trophy collectors

Amassing a wealth of virtual Trophies is certainly a gratifying hobby for many, but for Kuwait-based duck360—a team of PS3 Trophy collectors—it's a lifestyle. Mohammad Alsaad and his brothers, Aziz and Fahad, along with their friend Fawaz Alnasser, play games on the same PSN ID and hold the largest Trophy collection in the world. With more than 14,000 Trophies between them (over 300 Platinums), the four continue their Trophy hunting in hopes of landing a Guinness World Record.

"Gaming's been in our blood since we were born," says Alsaad. "Back on SNES, we loved completing games 100 percent—we used to play a game over and over to unlock everything. We haven't changed." But the journey hasn't been easy. After befriending Alnasser—originally a rival Trophy collector—and adding him to the team's roster, duck360 quickly landed the number two position on Trophy leaderboards in early 2010. For months the team struggled to best Hakoom, a Bahrain-based PSN user who was then the top Trophy holder. "We failed to beat him. We couldn't catch up to him, so everyone on my team quit collecting Trophies in March 2010," says Alsaad, adding that Hakoom's lead seemed to increase depending on duck360's progress.

duck360's Trophy Tips

PS3
DreamWorks
MEGAMIND
ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN
THQ
NINJA GAIDEN Σ2
PLAYSTATION 3
TECMO

Easiest Trophies	**Hardest Trophies**
- *MegaMind: Ultimate Showdown* - *Iron Man 2* - *Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters*	- *Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2* - *Warhawk* - *Gran Turismo 5* - *Sonic Unleashed* - *Vanquish*

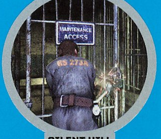
To reinvigorate his team, Alsaad developed a plan. By not syncing the team's Trophy acquisitions to the PlayStation servers, duck360 could covertly surpass Hakoom's lead, leaving him unaware of the team's progress until it was too late. In October 2010, duck360 became the first PSN ID to obtain 200 Platinum Trophies, dethroning Hakoom as the Trophy champion of the world. They've held the position ever since.

"We love gaming," says Alsaad. "Trophies or no Trophies, we will still play and complete games 100 percent. When we see our Trophy collection we get this awesome feeling for what we were able to do."

9 The Readers' Most Wanted

Well how about that. *Modern Warfare 3* continues to reign supreme for five months running (not surprisingly), and *BioShock: Infinite* remains absent. Again. Excuse us while we seek an isolated wooden glen so we can punch-dance our rage into oblivion. However, it's nice to see some football love with *Madden NFL 12* blitzing its way to the number two spot, and *Silent Hill: Downpour* has finally reared its fright-inducing head. Now, back to that wooded glen...

TWISTED METAL



SILENT HILL

01 *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*
02 *Madden NFL 12*
03 *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*
04 *God of War Origins Collection*
05 *Final Fantasy XIV*
06 *Final Fantasy XIII-2*
07 *Twisted Metal*
08 *Resistance 3*
09 *Batman: Arkham City*
10 *Metal Gear Solid: Rising*
11 *SoulCalibur V*
12 *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*
13 *Battlefield 3*
14 *Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3*
15 *Need for Speed: The Run*
16 *Everybody Dance*
17 *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*
18 *NBA 2K12*
19 *Silent Hill: Downpour*
20 *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection*

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of Ipsos OTX MediaCT's GamePlan Insights. All games are PS3 titles. Polling period was August 7, 2011, to August 20, 2011.

10 Is there hope for new game IPs?

When the going gets tough, the tough get sequels

Yes
Says the hopelessly hopeful
Ryan Taljonick

It's no secret that new IPs are few and far between these days (darn that pesky economy thing). Just look at the massive pile of sequels we'll be seeing in the next few months. Publishers are far more cautious when it comes to investing a great deal of money in a title or developer no one has ever heard of—but that doesn't mean new IPs are done for.

Sure, we may see less of them, but is that necessarily a bad thing? We've been barraged by mediocre games for years, many of which were forgotten weeks after their release. I do, however, think we'll see an increase in *quality* in new titles. Games like *Bulletstorm, L.A. Noire, Demon's Souls*—all of them are fairly new IPs that have done well for themselves because they were just *great games*.

We've seen a number of studios close their doors in recent years. It's very clear that a single failed game can mean the end for those who pour their blood, sweat, and tears into an industry we all love.

But the fact of the matter is every blockbuster franchise was a gamble at one point in time—without fresh ideas, we wouldn't have games like *Dead Space* or *Assassin's Creed,* both of which went on to become successful franchises. Neither were sure bets to start. I'm not saying sequels are a bad thing, but innovation, not repetition, is the pillar of our favorite hobby. That won't change anytime soon.

No
Says the perpetually pessimistic
Roger Burchill

Have you gone mad, Ryan? Do the eyes in your head actually function? Or have you not seen that practically every title that graces the pages of our magazine sports either an Arabic or Roman numeral behind it?

It's become so bad that some franchises have resorted to an obfuscating shell game of forgettable subtitles, primary games, and secondary offshoots to disguise the fact that you're playing installment 158 of the same damn game! But with improved graphics and an "innovative" new online mode called uber-extreme-deathmatch-capture, of course.

And do you know why? Because it sells. People love the familiar, the safe, the known—even if it's not very good. It's why they keep making *Final Destination* movies and why we keep electing presidents named Bush.

But I do grant you, even in the most barren wasteland, the rare creative flower can manage to sprout from a parched crack. Maybe it's a micro-budget PSN game fueled by a small, dedicated team. Or a real-deal innovator of a game that miraculously survived its marketing analysis.

Of course, the true irony is that should any of these daring, original IPs actually exhibit any signs of success, they'll be snapped up by a major publisher—who'll set about recycling them into high-volume, sequel-spawning franchise machines.

THE TRUTH WILL CHANGE YOU

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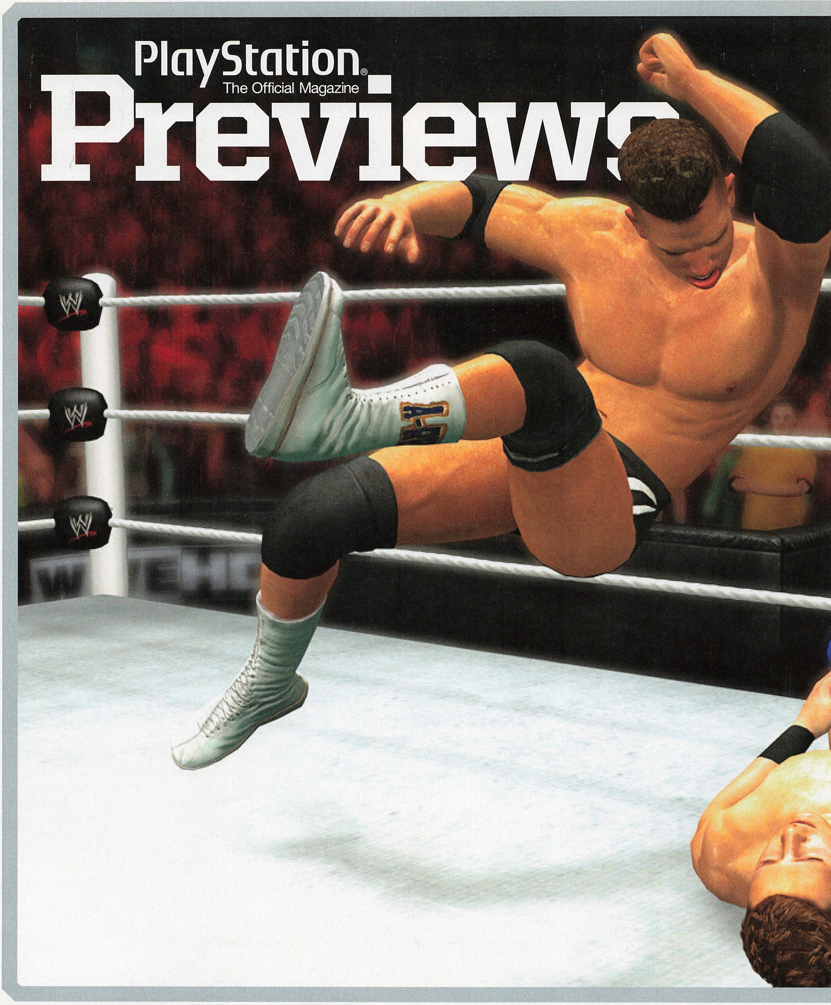
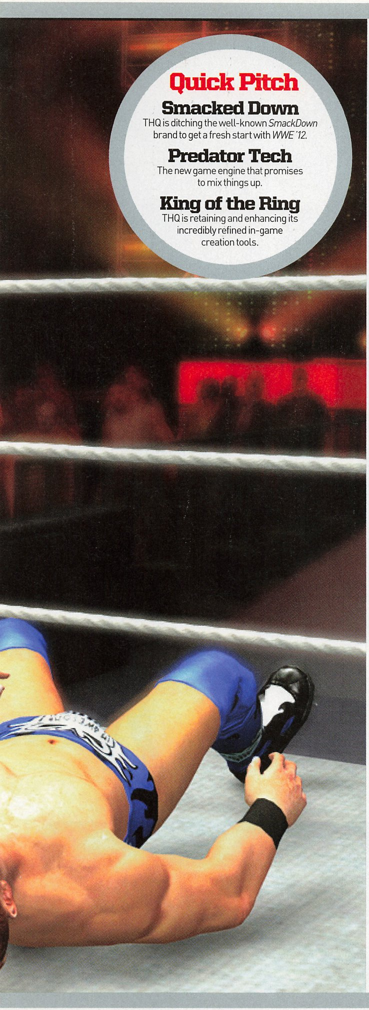
Previews



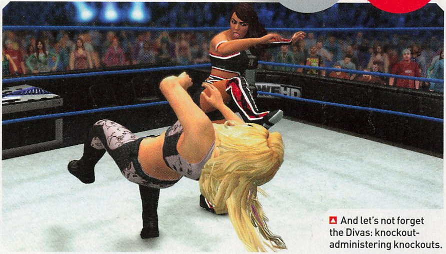


Quick Pitch

Smacked Down
THQ is ditching the well-known *SmackDown* brand to get a fresh start with *WWE '12*.

Predator Tech
The new game engine that promises to mix things up.

King of the Ring
THQ is retaining and enhancing its incredibly refined in-game creation tools.



And let's not forget the Divas: knockout-administering knockouts.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **THQ** Dev **Yuke's Media Creations**

WWE '12

Tonight, in this very ring...

The real-life WWE looks to be on a hot streak. CMPunk, undervalued for years, is now in the main event, while John Cena is slowly building up steam for his huge WrestleMania 28 match against The Rock. Publisher THQ is looking to turn things around for its WWE games as well with a bold move: ending its *SmackDown* series.

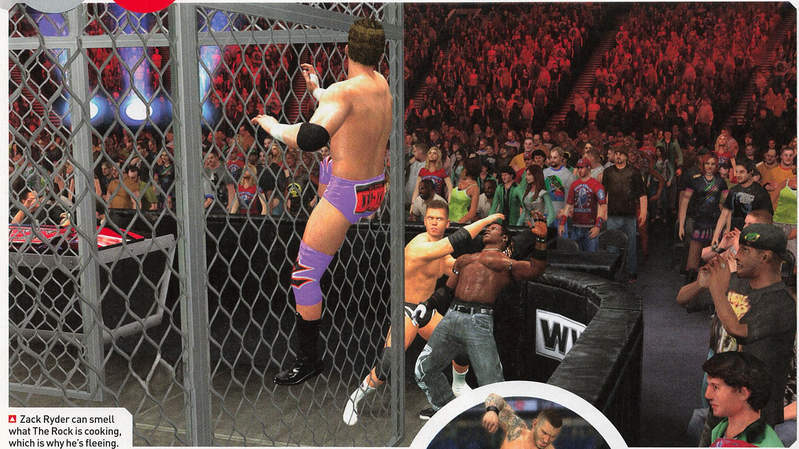
As a franchise, *SmackDown* started life on PSone and has been the top wrestling series ever since. Now THQ is starting over with the simply titled *WWE '12* and has a chance to really shake things up, as most WWE fans would admit *SmackDown* had lost a few steps. Can a name change transform this series into a whole new superstar (like going from Rocky Maivia to The Rock) or will it be a flop like every time Goldust changed his name?

Killer Bs or Just BS?

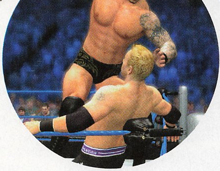
WWE '12 is really pushing the slogan "Bigger, Badder, Better," but just what does it all mean? Well, "Bigger" refers to the developer's desire to create the most feature-rich *WWE* game to date. "Badder" because they feel the action has been beefed up substantially. And "Better" comes from the fact that the game, apparently, will be greatly improved. Though it's easy to dismiss marketing jargon like that, our hands-on time indicates the game might be able to back up all that talk.

WWE '12's biggest changes strike at the very core of the experience, as the well-worn controls and gameplay of *SmackDown* have been refined, retooled, and, in some cases, totally overhauled. First off, grappling is back to a single button command just like strikes; no more maneuvering the Right stick for a headlock. While strikes remained largely unchanged, attacks can be focused on a particular limb to weaken it for a submission down the line. The submission system has been greatly reworked using the new Breaking Point system, meaning the victim can either fight it by mashing buttons or (a first for THQ wrestlers) reach for a nearby ring rope so the ref will break the hold, recreating some of the drama of the live matches.

Possibly the best change seen in our playthrough was the match pacing. Everything moved much faster, with a very noticeable improvement to hit recovery time. Technically the change only amounts to a matter of seconds, but in a close match, the difference is noticeable and appreciated. The match momentum has been similarly ▸▸



Zack Ryder can smell what The Rock is cooking, which is why he's fleeing.



"SmackDown" may have disappeared from the title, but smackdowns are still very much a part of the game.

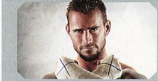
streamlined, which alters the all-important path to Signatures and Finishers. Where there was once a seesaw battle to take charge of a match, now momentum can only increase. An opponent could score a Signature sooner, but we never lose progress toward our special attacks, contributing to the quickening escalation of the action. Match supremacy can still change in an instant with the fairly unaltered reversal system, though the movements are much more fluid with the new engine.

Wake-up taunts are another welcome addition. When playing as Randy Orton, for example, if we pull off our predatory taunt, our unsteady opponent rises and runs right into an RKO, should our Finisher be ready. All these are fine additions, but what about everything *SmackDown* built over the years that we still loved? Has it all been thrown away?

Enduring Legacies

Despite breaking new ground in the ring, *WWE '12*'s aptly labeled "Bigger" feature set seems largely inherited from *SmackDown*. Over 80 different match variations, a lengthy single-player campaign, and a 60-plus deep roster of wrestlers (70-plus including planned DLC) are just the beginning, as *SmackDown*'s incredibly deep player

Roll Call Must-know WWE wrestlers



CMPunk
Hardcore fan favorite and voice of the voiceless.

Undertaker
The Phenom is still going, though he hasn't been seen much lately.

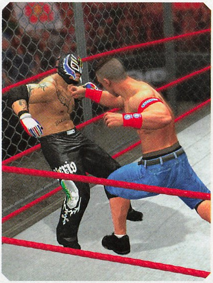
R-Truth
A conspiracy-minded superstar who's searching for answers.

Zack Ryder
"Woo woo woo... You know it!" Yes, Zack. Yes we do.

Rey Mysterio
We've been loving this high-flier's acrobatics since the '90s.

After all these years, Undertaker is still the master of Hell in the Cell.

As always, taunts play an important role. New wake-up taunts can even trick opponents into doing something stupid.



Rey takes to the air as only he can.

creation tools return with a vengeance.

Honed and mastered for over a decade, THQ has one of best player-creation toolsets in gaming history. Character, Finisher, and storyline creator tools all return for *WWE '12*, and create-an-arena—something hardcore fans have long desired—has finally been added. We saw the old *WCW Nitro* set, rings and announcers' tables styled after *DX*, even odd concepts like a grass-lined soccer pitch. Obviously all these assets need a place to shine, so the well-established online community will return for all that fan-generated content to be shared and rated.

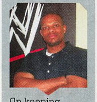
We were also really impressed with the roster of included wrestlers. We expected main eventers like Orton, Punk, and Cena, along with the Divas and a few lower tier guys like Santino and Kofi Kingston, but developer Yuke's Media Creations also reached far back into WWE history and included beloved icons like Ricky Steamboat, Arn Anderson, and Demolition, to name a few. It shows a refreshing respect for wrestling history that we applaud.

> "Honed for over a decade, THQ has one of the best player-creation toolsets in gaming history."

Our playtime with *WWE '12* the game was brief but informative, with the quicker pace and new control scheme being the most immediately noticeable and impactful additions. Though graphical improvements were subtler, we can attest that the character models and arenas look better than ever. Only time will tell if THQ has truly updated its star franchise's wrestling style, but for now, it certainly appears to be executing all the right moves.

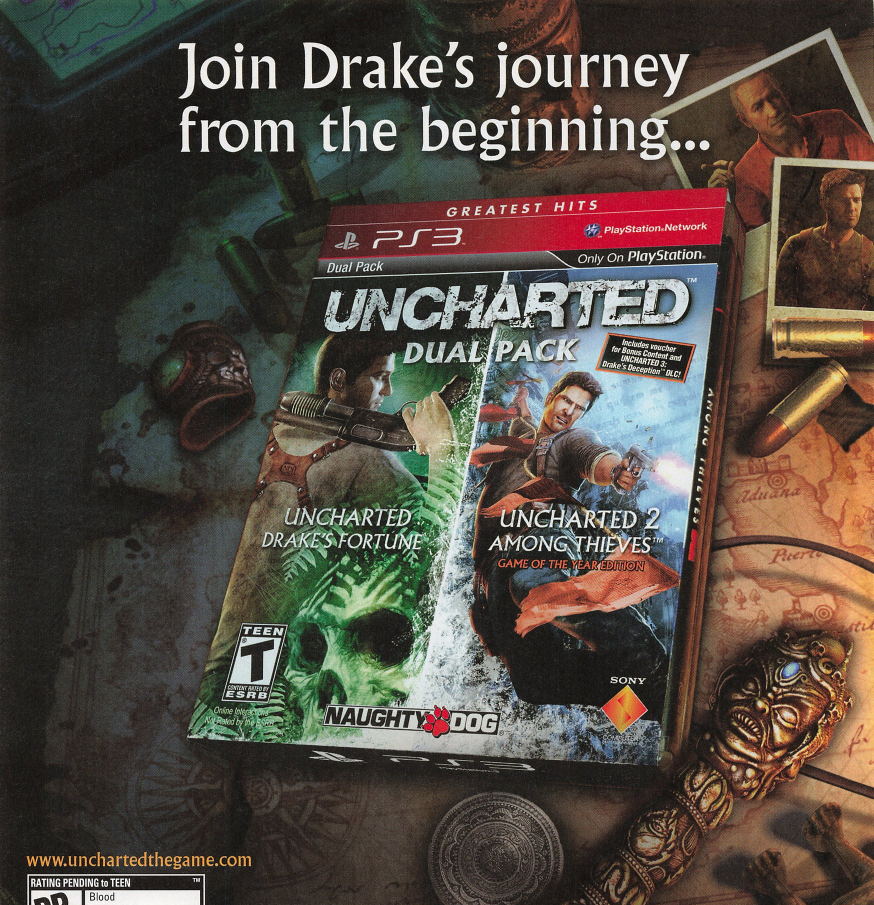
HENRY GILBERT

Dev Talk



On keeping entrance themes updated: "When I saw [CMPunk] had that new music...one email to WWE later, we got it."

Bryan Williams
Core Gameplay Designer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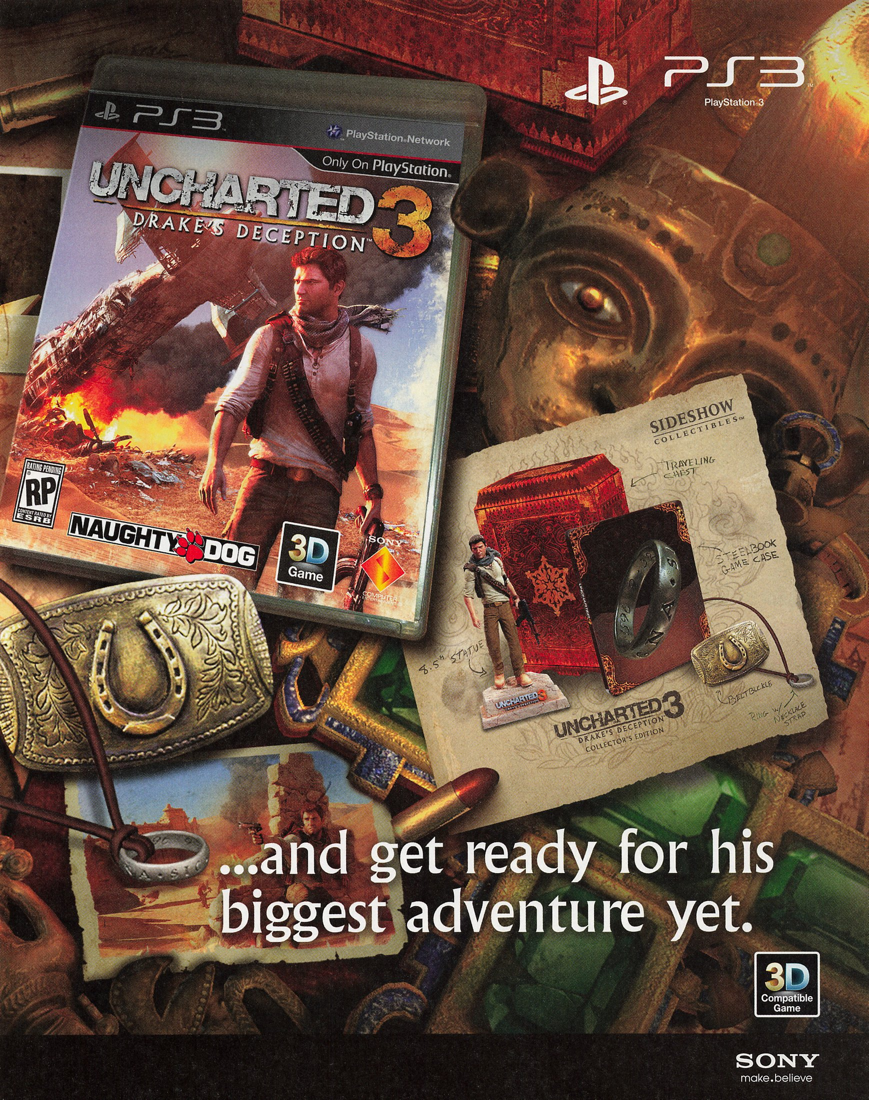
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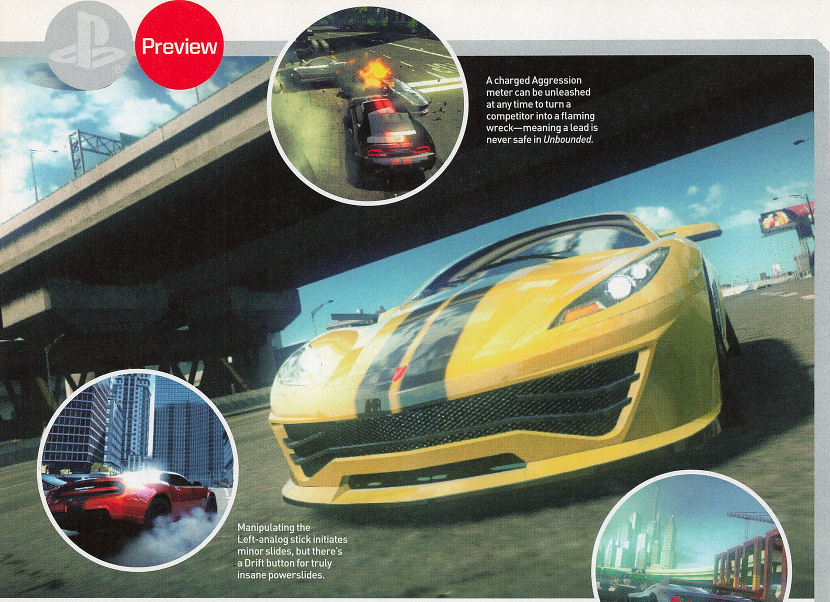


A charged Aggression meter can be unleashed at any time to turn a competitor into a flaming wreck—meaning a lead is never safe in *Unbounded*.

Manipulating the Left-analog stick initiates minor slides, but there's a Drift button for truly insane powerslides.

HANDS ON Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Bugbear Entertainment**

Ridge Racer Unbounded

Blasting through the racing game traffic

There was a time when the *Ridge Racer* franchise stood among the racing elite, equipped with nothing more than high-speed thrills and outrageous powerslides. Yet with the rise of rivals like *Gran Turismo*, the resurgent *Need for Speed* series, and quality newcomers like *Split/Second* and *GRID*, the one-time frontrunner unexpectedly finds itself at the back of the pack. But not for long.

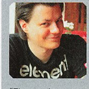
Ridge Racer: Unbounded still sports arcade-style driving action, but the focus has shifted away from organized races to no-holds-barred street racing through the city of Shattered Bay. The on-street drama even comes wrapped in a character-driven storyline involving rival racing gangs. Details on the story remain sparse, but the intent here is to create a grittier driving world where ruthlessness and aggression are rewarded.

Unbounded's new Aggression meter places the agro emphasis front and center. The meter fills by "driving like a badass," which means drafting, passing, and destroying (a franchise first) most everything in sight. Yes, the environment—including street lamps, statues, and support pillars—can be readily smashed through, with the only penalty being damage and deformation to our car.

But the reward for a powered up meter—as we discovered to our delight—isn't merely a turbo dash. Rather, a timely application of the X button can crash and explode a car in front of us or, if aimed at specially designated buildings, produce a shortcut-revealing cavalcade of destruction.

While the street racing action has *Ridge Racer* shifting into a higher gear, it's *Unbounded's* track creation feature that has our interest hitting the redline. Thanks to an extensive collection of easily manipulated 2D tiles, even novices can quickly create custom tracks that can be shared online. A racing game with the potential for a limitless track collection? That's what we call driving heaven. **ROGER BURCHILL**

Dev Talk



"The cars in *Ridge Racer: Unbounded* are unlicensed. Primarily because we didn't want to have restrictions placed on destroying the vehicles."

Joonas Laasko
Producer, Bugbear Entertainment

LONG LIVE PLAY.

See what Kevin Butler has to say at
www.us.PlayStation.com/PS3/

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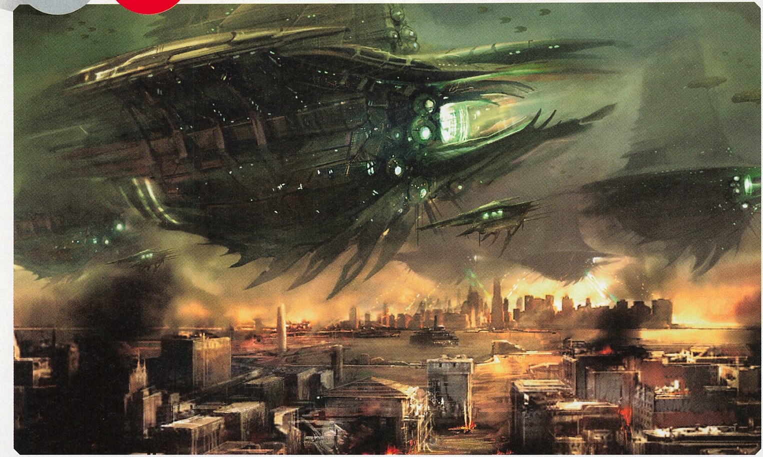


FIRST LOOK Format **PS Vita** ETA **Q1 2012** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Nihilistic Software**

Resistance
Burning Skies
Less Restribution, more Resistance

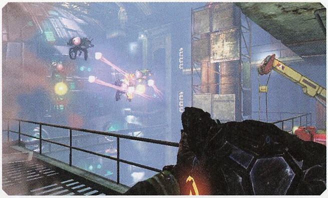
With *Resistance* a well-established mainstay in the PlayStation family, a Vita game—potentially a launch one, at that—is only fitting. Enter *Resistance: Burning Skies*, which brings first-person Chimera killing to the palm our hand and, more importantly, to the tips of both our thumbs. That's right, there's proper dual-analog shooter controls for the first time on a PlayStation handheld.

Set prior to *Resistance 2*, the 1950s New York City of *Burning Skies* gives us a look at life in the Big Apple before it goes from bad to worse in *Resistance 3*. The game chronicles a fireman's rise from civil servant to guerrilla legend. His tursty fire axe is handily tied to a touchscreen overlay button, so even if we've got the ruthless new Chimeran chaingun equipped, cleaving is never more than a screen tap away.

Burning Skies doesn't seem to sacrifice much of the console games' grandeur. New York ain't a tiny town, so there's a lot of ground to cover and plenty of people to save. We strongly suspect *Burning Skies'* online multiplayer, coupled with Vita's extensive social tools, will give it lengthy legs once we've cracked the campaign wide open.

MITCH DYER

▲ Developer Nihilistic has previously worked on the titles *PlayStation Move Heroes* and *Zombie Apocalypse*.



▲ Our hero Tom Riley wakes up in an experimental facility. What'll he have hidden up his sleeve (or underneath his skin)?

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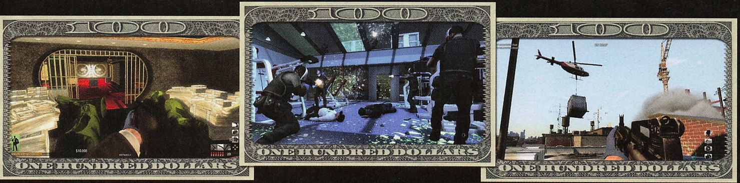

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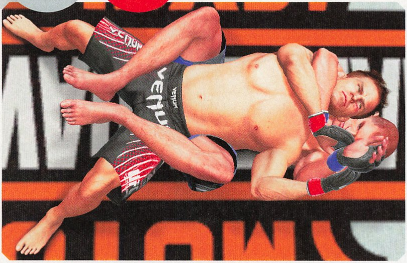


HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **January 2012** Pub **THQ** Dev **Yuke's**

UFC Undisputed 3

We aim to maim. Repeatedly.

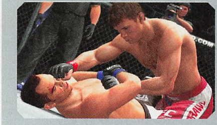
If *UFC Undisputed 2010* was the head-crushing kick that sent us to the mat, then *UFC Undisputed 3* is the flurry of punches that turned our faces into hamburger after we were already unconscious—just for good measure.

Presenting a roster of more than 150 fighters, the addition of a Pride fighting mode, and a slew of newbie-friendly features, *Undisputed 3* is beefing up to be one hell of a powerhouse. We were glad to see an in-game advice system for improving our technique as well as an easy-to-use amateur control scheme. In a clinch situation, we could flick up or down on the Right-analog stick to bring the fight to the ground or keep it upright. Once on the mat, the same control format allowed us to quickly perform major or minor transitions before attempting a submission.

That's not to say Pro controls aren't worth learning, however. Those who master traditional controls can feign attacks to gain the upper hand or more easily counteract ground-based transitions. *Undisputed 3's* brutal, life-like fighting action makes it a contender for our next fighting game of choice.

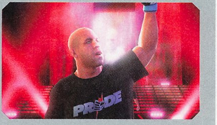
RYAN TALJONICK

Behind the scenes



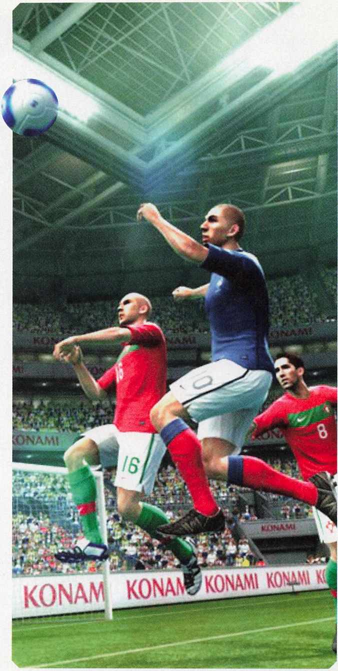
Realism

Plenty of improvements have been made this time around to make our fights more visceral. We can bob and weave to avoid attacks while engaging in a more fluid, natural striking system. We can leverage our body against the cage, leg check incoming kicks, and most importantly, continue dominating our fallen opponents to ensure victory.



Immersion

There's a lot going on in and out of the ring to make our UFC experience feel more real than ever before. Commentators accurately discuss each fighter's strengths and weaknesses, crowd chants are more responsive, and we can finally customize our fighter's entrance to the arena, including his walkout and lighting scheme.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Konami** Dev **Konami**

PES 2012

A solid shot on goal

Don't believe in miracles? After years in *FIFA's* shadow, Konami's once undefeatable *PES* may be on the verge of a comeback.

The most notable improvement in our latest hands-on is the passing that's finally fast and fluid. While *PES 2011* saw players stall after earning possession, this edition has the snappy distribution of the vintage PS2 days. It's also aided by better A.I. runs—a forward sprinting diagonally across the last defender, or a fullback overlapping midfielders without having to be commanded. It all adds up to a faster experience, one where we can actually trust our teammates. **JAMES COATES**

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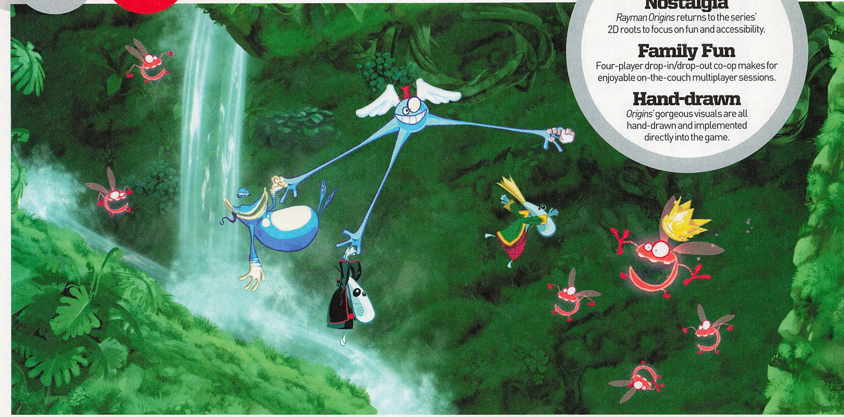


Quick Pitch

Nostalgia
Rayman Origins returns to the series' 2D roots to focus on fun and accessibility.

Family Fun
Four-player drop-in/drop-out co-op makes for enjoyable on-the-couch multiplayer sessions.

Hand-drawn
Origins' gorgeous visuals are all hand-drawn and implemented directly into the game.

▲ Some creatures can be used as swinging platforms to snag the flying Lums. Gotta collect 'em all!

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Q4** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montpellier**

Rayman Origins

Who needs arms, legs, or a third dimension?

It's been awhile since our pal Rayman graced us with his presence. But after eight years and nearly as many spin-off titles, he'll finally make his return in *Rayman Origins* later this year. Restoring the series to its 2D platforming roots, *Origins* is bursting with brilliant hand-drawn artwork. From the game's kooky characters to its 60-plus levels, every last detail pops with an incredible artistic allure that reflects the world's whimsical spirit.

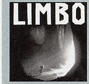
Expect all manner of whacky settings and silly encounters—giant chunks of fruit populate the icy stage of Frosty Delight, while farting chili peppers inhabit the lava-laden cooking world, Don't Burn Dinner. Exploring these environments is an enjoyable treat in itself, but nearly every stage offers a distinct gameplay experience that adds to *Origins'* appeal. Some levels are traditional platforming stages while others present the opportunity to hop on the backs of giant-eyed mosquitos and engage in 2D aerial dogfights against flying baddies.

The game's fast-paced platforming is refreshingly straightforward and fun, and up to four players can play at once via drop-in co-op, controlling Rayman, his friend Globox, and two wizard-like Teensies. Yet we were caught off guard by *Origins'* surprisingly challenging (and in some cases, downright difficult) gameplay. Many stages required us to move quickly between platforms with little margin for error. This became problematic with a full team of four thanks to a friendly fire mechanic—we could slap our friends around the stage, propelling them off ledges and sending them to their deaths (even if by "accident") and at times it was difficult to keep track of which character we were controlling.

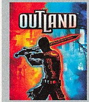
However, playing co-op has a certain charm, and we found ourselves laughing out loud at the on-screen antics as we raced to outscore friends by amassing score-increasing Lums and bonus level-unlocking Skull coins. Holding up on the D-pad lifts our character's arms, allowing our friends to jump on our hands and use us as a platform to snag otherwise unreachable collectibles, and we can also revive incapacitated teammates—who float around as inflated bubbles—with a swift punch or kick.

We also got some hands-on time with the PlayStation Vita version of the game, which lacks its PS3 counterpart's multiplayer component, but looks just as great. The front multi-touch display can be used to quickly zoom in and out on the game's environments by "pinching" the screen, and the game controls felt just as fluid as they did on the PS3 version. With its unique artwork and unparalleled sense of style, *Origins* may make us forget why we ever clamored for a third dimension. **RYAN TALJONICK**

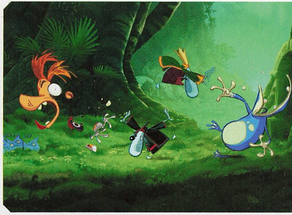
Can't Wait? Play these



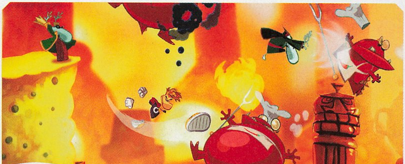
Limbo
(PSN, 2011)
This 2D sidescroller presents an eerily dark atmosphere as we depart on a journey to find our missing sister.



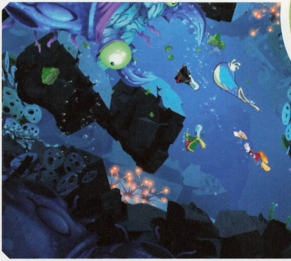
Outland
(PSN, 2011)
A 2D platformer with hack-'n'-slash combat, *Outland* makes use of a polarity system; toggling between light and dark powers lets us avoid traps.

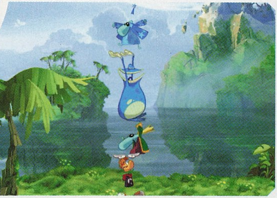


Part of what makes *Origins'* multiplayer component so hectic is the fact that we can slap our allies silly.

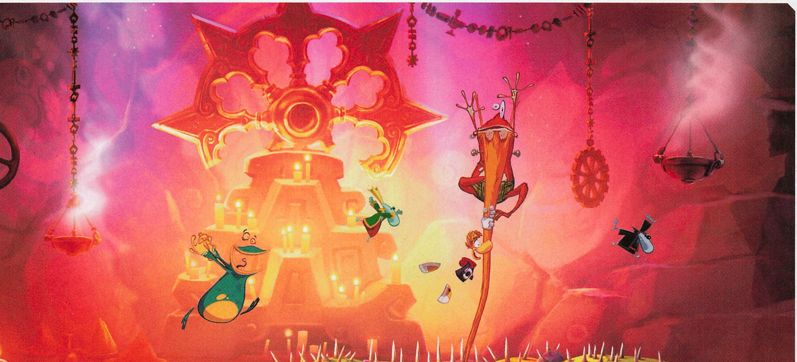


Toppling giant wheels of cheese and fork-wielding creatures is what Rayman calls "exercise."





The team pyramid is a great technique for reaching seemingly out-of-reach collectibles.



We gain new abilities, such as shrinking in size, as we play the game.

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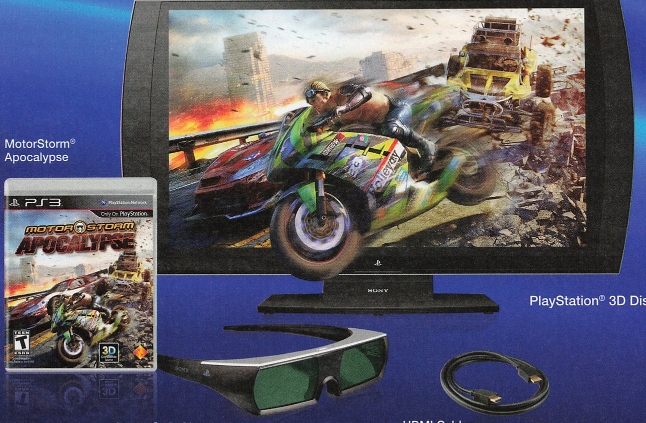

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Four unlikely allies must work together to survive the unknown alien threat.

HANDS ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Insomniac Games**

Ratchet & Clank All 4 One

Can't we all just get along?

When the universe needs saving, we can't think of a more entertaining duo to call upon than Ratchet and Clank. But throw Galactic President Copernicus Qwark and archenemy Dr. Nefarious into the mix as allies and, well, things get a little complicated.

The good news is that this adds a refreshing level of competitiveness to *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One's* cooperative gameplay. One to four players can assume the identity of their favorite character in offline, local, or online co-op action, but there's always some distrust between the unlikely quartet as they battle their way across the planet Magnus to thwart a mysterious alien threat. Working together to fight alien hordes increases the odds of survival, but there's a constant incentive to be the foursome's top gun for upgrade rewards and, of course, bragging rights.

Teamwork reared its friendly head when we faced off against the giant slug-like WigWump creature, where we discovered that coordinating our team firepower multiplied our weapons' damage effect.

But the highlight of our visit was the Guardian level where we manned weapon turrets astride a giant robot as it battled its giant counterparts. We swung and blasted our way across the level to Dr. Croid's lab to discover the secret of the Ephemeris, the planet-sized ship that had abducted us and transported us to Magnus. The only downside is that we'll have to wait until October for the answer, just like everybody else. **ROGER BURCHILL**

Dev Talk

"We always have more weapon ideas than we know what to do with. We go through notebook after notebook and fill up white boards. It's one of the funnest parts of development; every team member has five or six pet ideas. It's actually harder to edit them down to a usable list than to think of them in the first place."

Chad Dezern
North Carolina Studio Director, Insomniac Games

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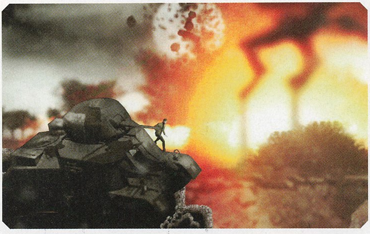
FIRST LOOK Format **PSN** ETA **Fall** Pub **Paramount Digital Ent.** Dev **Other Ocean**

The War of the Worlds

Slowly and surely they drew their plans against us

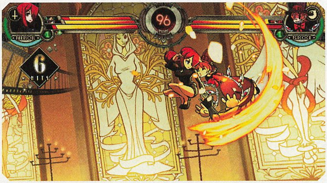


There's not a single 3D object in the game, but some environments feature up to 60 two-dimensional layers.

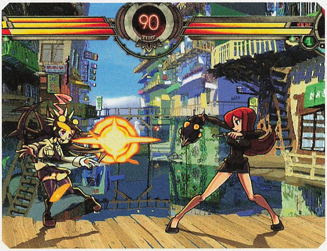
When Paramount Pictures throws open the vault and says, "All right, pick a franchise, any franchise," what do you do? Grab a fistful of *Mission Impossible* and make a mad dash for the bank, or go for something classier? For the team at Other Ocean, the choice was obvious. They opted for *The War of the Worlds*. The game—which is intended to serve as a companion piece to the 1953 film—shifts the narrative back to the book's original London setting, where Patrick Stewart's dulcet tones recount the everyman protagonist's desperate search for his brother and fiancé during the height of an alien invasion.

Paralleling the work's timeless appeal, the gameplay adopts a return-to-roots approach to the side-scrolling platformer that closely resembles the first *Prince of Persia*: Players jump, grab, and roll their way past enemies and hazards, avoiding combat whenever possible since the game features zero weapons. Using stealth to avoid the ubiquitous spotlights and sentry drones is the required strategy.

Other Ocean's unflinching commitment to old school panache even extends to the visuals, with layered 2D environments and rotoscoped animation. Combined with the de-saturated visual style, the graphics provide a creepy cool sci-fi atmosphere to compliment the story. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**



Apologies to Cammy and Chun-Li, but it's nice to have a 2D fighting game alternative that's not a complete meat fest.



HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **Winter** Pub **Autumn Games** Dev **Reverge Labs**

Skullgirls

Girls just wanna kick ass

At first glance, *Skullgirls* looks like a Capcom fighting game—some *Darkstalkers/Street Fighter* knock-off looking to make a quick downloadable buck. Sure it's a 2D fighter, sure it pays homage to the game that turned the word "guile" into a vengeful, flat-topped U.S.A.F. character, but really, what fighting game doesn't? So what makes *Skullgirls* different? Well for one, the fledgling Reverge Labs is filled with fighting game superfans, so as enthusiasts, they took out all of the 2D fighter stuff we don't like and put in all the stuff we do.

Take for instance, infinite combos. Because Reverge utilizes their own proprietary sprite-based game engine, they built in an algorithm to analyze loops and programmed an escape feature. Get whaled on, repeatedly, and the hit icons turn red. Tap a button and voilà: chain-breaking attack. With up-to-three character teams, unblockable (read: annoying) low- and high-assist combos are also eliminated. Jumping back and pushing buttons won't build super meters either.

The game also sports hand-drawn character art on a 3D background with dynamic real-time lighting. Attacks and light sources from the scenery add a glow to the anime-style characters. It's a nice melding of old- and new-school visuals. Other details, such as having to *hold* the Start button to pause the game (rather than risking a heat-of-the-battle accidental brush) really show Reverge's attention to detail—not bad for the studio's first title.

With eight characters at launch, lag-limiting GGPO online enabled, and most importantly, robust game mechanics, *Skullgirls* looks like it may give the 2D-fighting big boys a run for their money. **CARTER JUNG**

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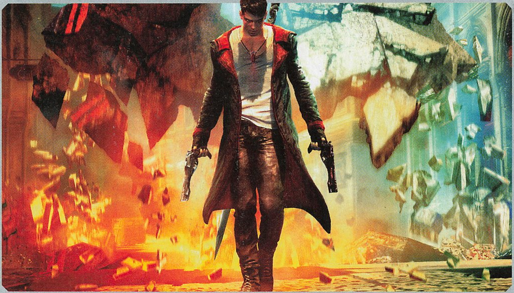
The latest on...

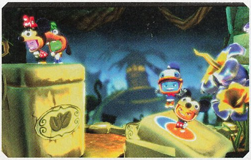
New shots, new games, new info

DmC

Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Ninja Theory**

It's a well-known fact that Dante has a very different look in Capcom's forthcoming *DmC*, a re-imagining of the beloved *Devil May Cry* series. But here's another fact: Dante's still a badass. Using a powerful scythe, he can launch enemies into the air and engage in sustained aerial combat while switching between his trusty handguns and sword. *DmC* also features dynamic layers of audio; executing huge combo chains and avoiding enemy damage means more layers of music will be added to the background as we fight, amplifying the demon-destroying experience as we paint the city red with their blood. That is, if demons have blood.

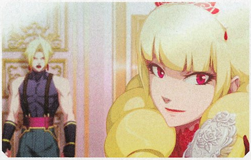




Disney Universe

Format **PSN** ETA **October** Pub/Dev **Disney Interactive Studios**

We've always had a strong desire to wear our favorite Disney characters like they're some sort of macabre suit made of childhood joy. *Disney Universe* lets us do just that as we experience some of our favorite Disney celebrities.



King of Fighters XIII

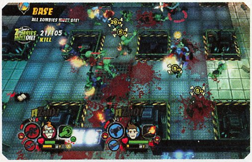
Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Atlus** Dev **SNK Playmore**

The popular Japanese fighting franchise *King of Fighters* is getting its HD makeover and heading to the states. Several new characters have been added to the roster, and the classics will make their appearances as well.

Anarchy Reigns

Format **PS3** ETA **January** Pub **Sega** Dev **PlatinumGames**

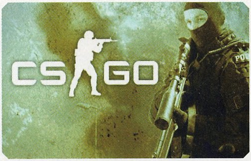
Balls-to-the-wall brawler *Anarchy Reigns* has announced new characters like Oinkie, a porcine beast of a man with the ability to juice up and become a monster, and Durga, who has a cybernetic leg and an unhealthy love for tigers.



All Zombies Must Die

Format **PSN** ETA **Q4** Pub **Square Enix** Dev **Doublesix**

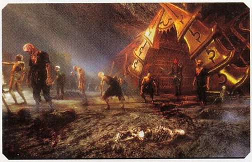
The spiritual successor to *Burn Zombie Burn!*, *All Zombies Must Die* is a twin-stick shooter/RPG hybrid in which players choose from four characters, each with their own skills and status effects, as they fight off the zombie hordes with a huge arsenal of badass weapons.



Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

Format **PSN** ETA **2012** Pub **Valve** Dev **Valve**

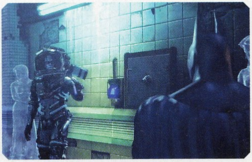
Finally, one of our favorite shooters is coming to our absolute favorite console: Valve has announced *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* for PSN. It will update *Counter-Strike: Source* with new maps, modes, and Trophies, but retain the timeless online gameplay.



The Dark Eye: Demonicon

Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Kalypso Media**
Dev **Noumena Studios Berlin**

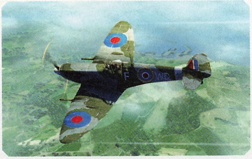
Set in *The Dark Eye* universe, *Demonicon* follows two lovers through the Shadow Lands of Aventuria as they fight demons and undead in this gloomy RPG. Choice plays a large role as player-based decisions can affect the whole continent.



Batman: Arkham City

Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive**
Dev **Rocksteady**

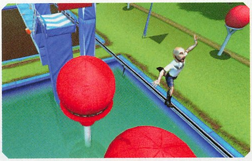
Those who played *Arkham Asylum* might remember that Mr. Freeze escaped the asylum prior to the game. Well, apparently he didn't get too far since he's now slated to step up next to Poison Ivy and the Penguin as one of *Arkham City's* villains.



Combat Wings

Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub/Dev **City Interactive**

Featuring 50 planes, 30 missions, four theaters of war, and "the greatest battles of World War II," *Combat Wings* provides flight sim fans with a healthy dose of arcadey dogfights, bombing runs, and at least one battle with a submarine.



Wipeout 2

Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Activision** Dev **Endemol**

Watching people maim themselves by failing a trap-laden obstacle course on national TV show *Wipeout* is hilariously fun. Now, *Wipeout 2*—complete with Move controls—allows us to virtually follow suit in front of friends and family alike.

Gut Reaction

What's right and what bites

▲PSN Play

A PSN program that can score us free stuff with our game purchases? Sounds good to us.

▲Price Point

The PS3's price has dropped to $249.99?! Tell us we're not dreaming!

▲ Vita Control

The PlayStation Vita can be used as a controller for our PS3. As if we needed another reason to want a Vita.

▼3D Swap

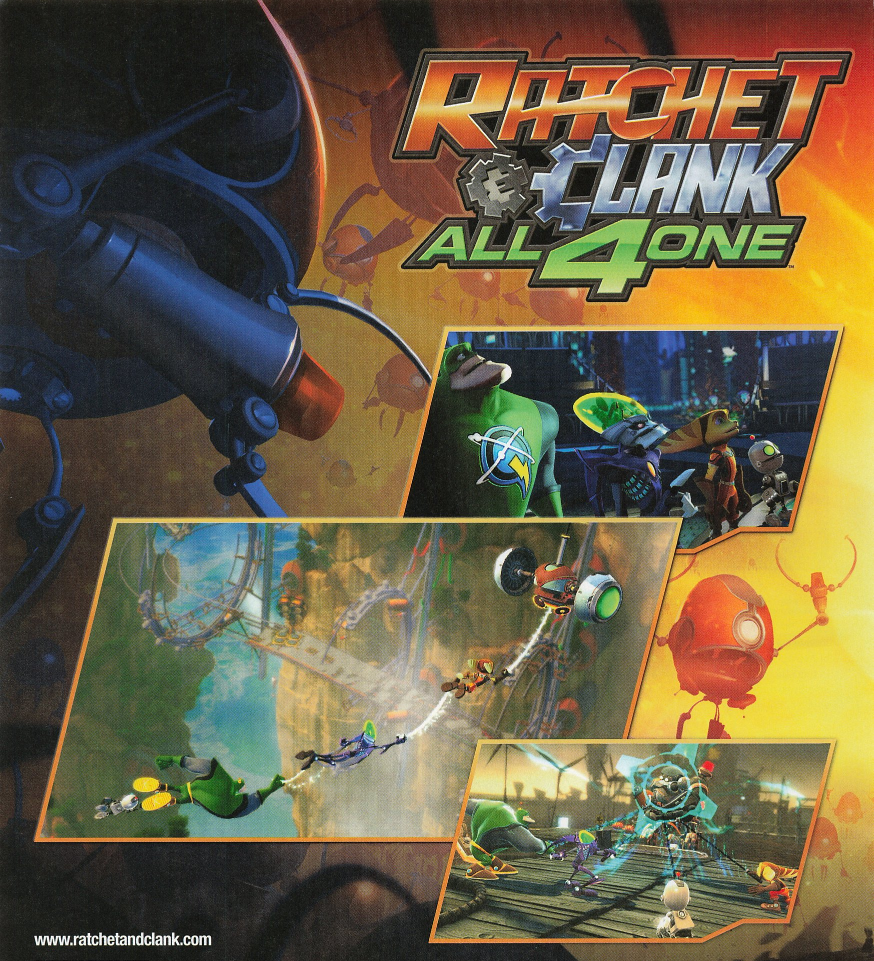
Sony's 3D TV Display no longer includes *Resistance 3*. It comes with *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* instead.

▼Delayed Destruction

Yes, it's true. *Twisted Metal's* release date has been pushed back to February 2012. Better late than never.

▼ Cross Talk

Sony confirms that a cross-game chat feature will never grace PS3.



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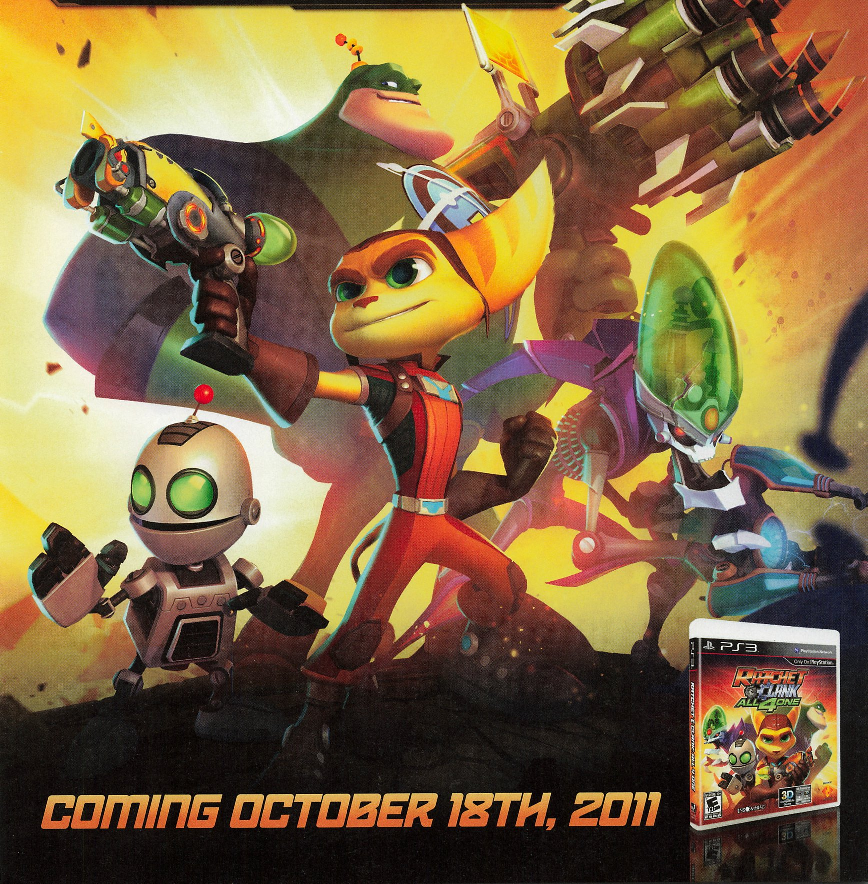
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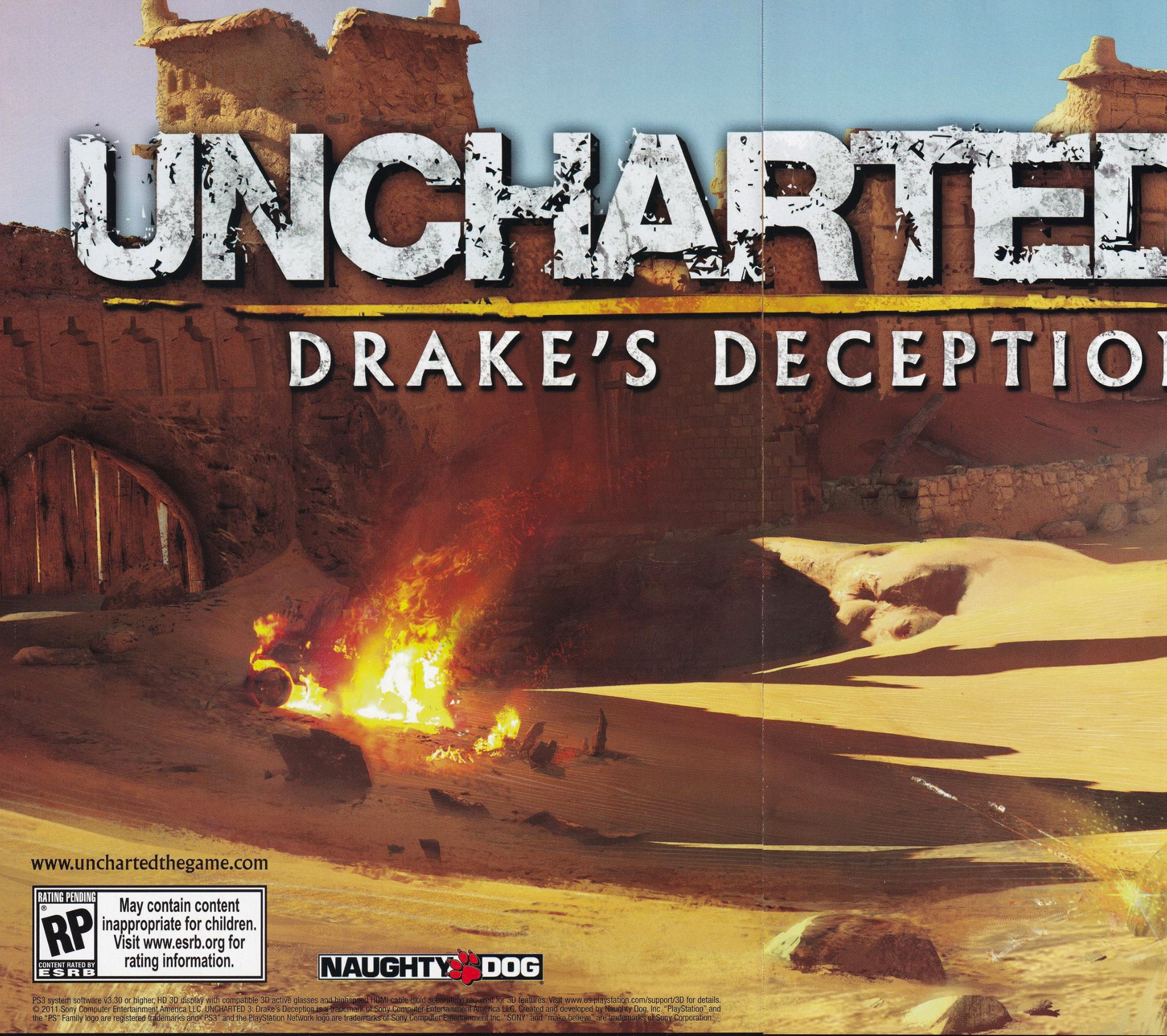

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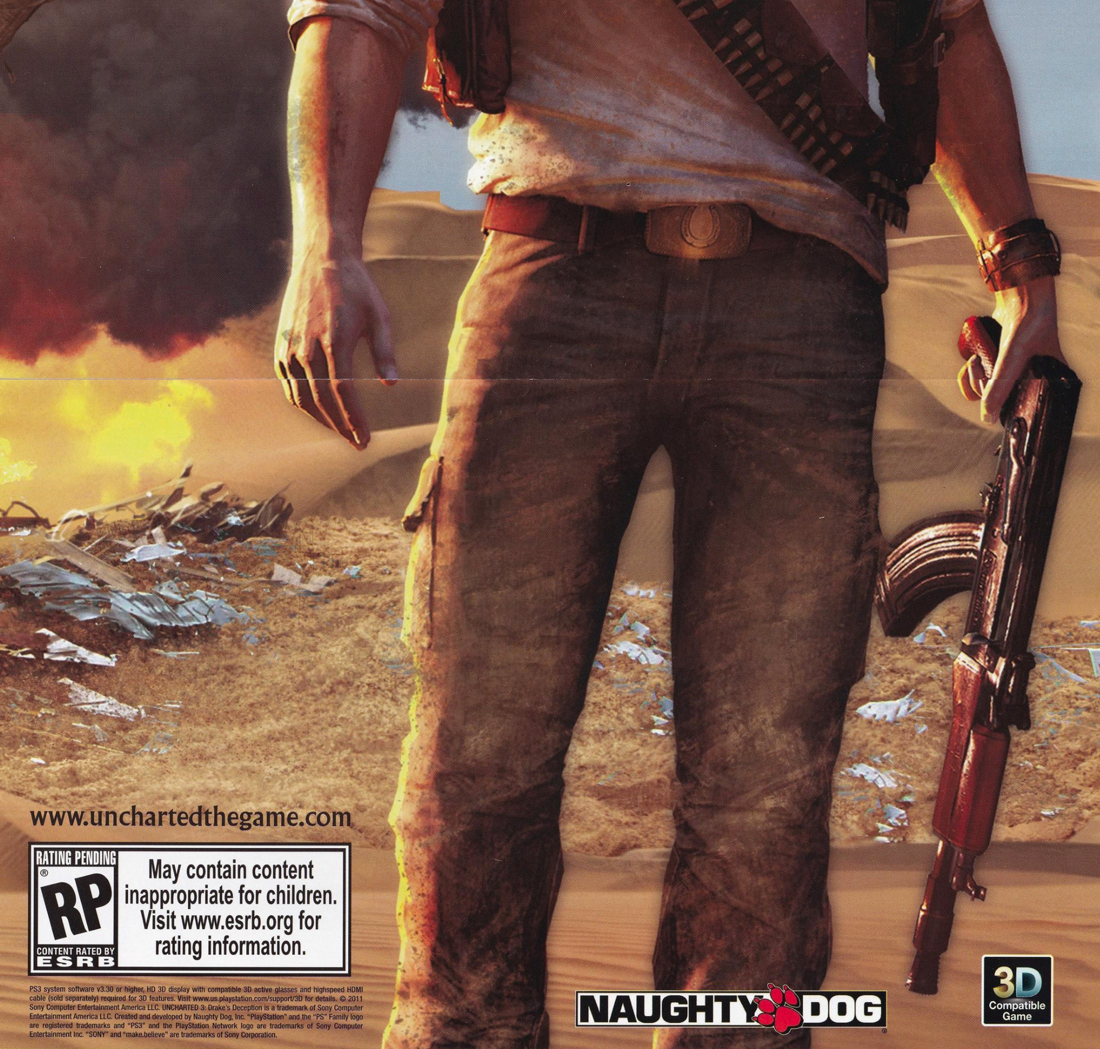

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MR 5

Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Activision** Dev **Infinity Ward / Sledgehammer Games**

AMERICA PREPARES FOR WAR

WE STAND ON THE CUSP OF BATTLE.
THE MOTHER OF ALL SHOOTERS—AMERICA'S SHOOTER—
CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3
IS ON THE HORIZON. ONE LAST CHANCE TO GET THE
DROP ON OUR FRIENEMIES. WE HEED THE CALL.

BY EVAN SHAMOON

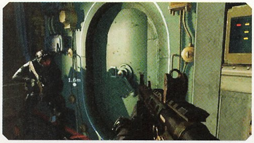
"I don't focus on kill-to-death ratio at all. I'm going to run in and jump on the flag." –Robert Bowling

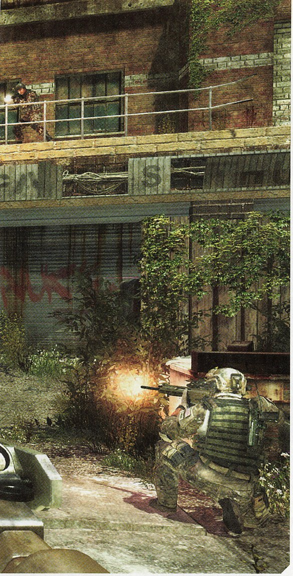
ONLINE OFFENSIVE

There's a lot of newness in *Modern Warfare 3's* multiplayer mode: New perks, new weapons, new attachments, and new features. A particular area of reexamination has been killstreaks and how they reward the player. "Of the new killstreak rewards that you're going to see, a lot of the focus has shifted in *MW3*," says Infinity Ward creative strategist Robert Bowling. "That has been a learning lesson coming out of *MW2*, and listening to the feedback of the 30 million people who are playing our game. That's a huge benefit to us to have an audience of that size to go to—a knowledge base to get a gut check of where we can improve and take inspiration from and build on our previous games."

As such, many of the new attachments and much of the new special equipment is focused on how to make a variety of playstyles more accessible and more incentivized. "In the past, things like the killstreak system were inherently rewarding people who had a great kill-to-death ratio," Bowling says. "They were focused on that 'killer' playstyle—that run and gunner, assault sort of thing, and people who wanted to play objectives didn't have the kinds of rewards and experiences that maybe that high kill-to-death ratio guy had. The list includes portable radar, a trophy system, SAM sites, and other things a player can do to support their team as a whole. Perhaps more importantly, the core game mechanic has to be encouraged, and we've advanced and altered the game's ranking systems to compensate. A progressive ranking system is now applied to each character, acquiring XP and ranking up over time, unlocking new abilities in the process. Every weapon can be ranked up as well; as the player is using a favorite weapon, they're leveling it up and unlocking attachments, camo treatments, and the all-new weapon proficiencies."

Weapon proficiencies are a new way to allow players to further customize their play style with an individual weapon. They can enable things like "less flinch," so that when they're taking heavy damage, they're not losing precision in their aiming stabilization. For someone using the Assault class, there's the enhanced ability to hold their breath when aiming through sights to steady their aim further. Whether focused on speed or accuracy, the ability to change how a weapon is used becomes essential for success.





Killstreaks are now broken down into what the team calls "strike packages," giving the player control over the rewards they achieve, and how they attain them. There are three of these, with the Assault package being the most traditional: Kills chain together, and reset upon death. Most of the killstreaks here are focused on getting kills: chopper gunner, Predator missiles, and the like.

TEAM FOCUS

Rather different is the Support package, which Bowling uses to demonstrate an alternative approach. "I love the Support package because I'm [a] very objective-focused player," says Bowling. "I don't focus on kill-to-death ratio at all. I'm playing Domination, and I'm the guy who'll say 'cover me', and I'm going to run in and jump on the flag, and throw grenades back. I don't care if I get f–king blown up—I'm going to get that Domination point. So the kill-to-death ratio mentality of getting killstreaks doesn't work for me, despite being a good player."

While Bowling may have been placing high on the leaderboards in *MW2's* Domination mode, he wasn't getting high killstreaks, and was missing out on the rewards that come with them. In this way, the Support package allows players to work their way up to those killstreak rewards, mainly because they don't reset upon death in the Support package. "So you can get a few this time, die, get a few more, die, and then gradually be unlocking them," says Bowling, pointing out that the killstreak rewards being unlocked are different from those in the Assault package.

Interestingly, these rewards are focused on not only making the individual become a better player, but also helping their group be a better team. Players are rewarded for supporting squadmates, and providing them with situational awareness via advanced UAVs, as well as air support, which provides more intelligence on the ground. Options like being able to throw out ballistic vests that teammates can pick up change the dynamic considerably: With one player taking Support class and the other Assault, one is running in and taking enemies down, while the other is there to make sure he stays alive.

The third and final option is the Specialist package, which is aimed at the expert, lone-wolf player. It doesn't provide air support or drop equipment from the sky, but rather gives players the ability to assign three additional perks to their class, perks that will unlock every two kills. So players create their standard loadout, with their standard perks, and are now able to strategically choose which perks they want to unlock after that. Bowling provides another example of his own personal playstyle: "I like to use the Scavenger perk that allows you to pick up more ammo. You don't need that right out of the gate, because when you first start a match you have a full magazine. So now, I can reserve that spot in my custom class for something I'm always going to get benefit from, like Sitrep or Recon— something that always allows me to use it, and then after I get a few kills, and I start chaining up and I'm running low on ammo, then Scavenger activates, and I'm picking up ammo and getting a benefit from it."

In a Capture the Flag situation, Bowling focuses his custom class on kills because he wants to fight his way to the flag, and then once he gets to the flag and has chained up enough kills, he unlocks Extreme Conditioning, providing him with a longer sprint to get out of Dodge with the flag in tow. "There are so many nuances that you can get into with the Specialist class, which I love," says Bowling. "It really lets you change your playstyle to be an objective player, and be rewarded for being an objective player. Or be an Assault guy and be rewarded in that way, rather than trying to define either experience for you. That's what *Modern Warfare 3* is all about: It's really giving a platform to have fun the way you want to have fun. And that's our biggest challenge, having an audience of 30 million players—they all have a very, very different definition of what fun is, and how they have fun."

Axis and Allies

The battle within the battle

It hasn't been an easy road for *Modern Warfare 3*—the drama surrounding its development was as intense as the game's virtual combat. Early last year, just months after the release of *Modern Warfare 2*, publisher Activision fired Infinity Ward co-founders Jason West and Vince Zampella for what it called "breaches of contract and insubordination." The two sued Activision, and Activision counter-sued. Nearly half of the remaining Infinity Ward employees abruptly resigned, many joining West and Zampella at their newly-formed studio, Respawn Entertainment, for which Electronic Arts provided seed capital (the studio's first title will be published under the EA Partners label).

Shortly thereafter, Activision revealed that it had also formed a new studio, Sledgehammer Games, with Glen Schofield and Michael Condrey (formerly of EA's Visceral Games) running the show. On top of all that, *MW3* finally appears to have its first real competition in the form of EA and DICE's upcoming *Battlefield 3*, which releases two weeks before it.

Has the current team felt added pressure due to the rather turbulent circumstances it has found itself in? "It's the same for us because we never really get caught up in sales figures or being the largest entertainment launch of all time," says *MW3's* creative strategist Robert Bowling. "Like every game, we go into it with a very clear vision. We want to make a game that we love, that we know our fans are going to love, that they're going to have a fun time with. And that's all we focus on."

KILLER CAMPAIGN

Of course, none of this would be a *Modern Warfare* game without an intense, suitably epic campaign experience. The story picks up right after the close of *Modern Warfare 2*, in which Russia invaded the U.S. while the elite counter-terrorist squad Task Force 141 attempted to gather evidence against Russian ultranationalist leader Vladimir Makarov. Washington, D.C. is burning, Task Force 141 is either dead or in trouble, and your team is tasked with joining Delta team in Manhattan to help turn the tide against the Russians. Not that it ends there; the game goes globetrotting, delivering combat in London, throughout Europe, Russia, parts of Africa, and the Himalayas.

The first mission we're shown, called Black Tuesday, picks up at the start of the New York campaign. The player starts aboard a Black Hawk helicopter that's just crash-landed in the city's financial district, with the objective of getting to the stock exchange through a large-scale battle. Missiles fly overhead and remove chunks of skyscrapers, while bombed-out police cars and APCs fill the streets. It's massive and chaotic, and the only way to get through it is with the direction of your superior, Sandman.

The ensuing 15 minutes take us through alleys, a jewelry store, and the stock exchange itself, highlighted by a spectacular shootout on the trading floor. After climbing a series of scaffolding platforms onto the roof (where we use explosives to take out a satellite dish and block enemy communications), we remote-guide Reaper missiles at enemy positions, finally taking out a chopper and watching it fall

The story picks up right after the close of *MW2*

explosively to the streets below. We then hop inside a Black Hawk and do battle with another chopper between the skyscrapers.

The other level we're shown has us with a Bravo Six team on a covert mission around London's docks. As a soldier named Burns, we use a silenced P90 to pick off enemies stationed inside a warehouse, and then make our way into the dock for a full-on assault. Car alarms blare in the light rain; when several of the soldiers escape, we give chase in a truck along the railway tracks and down into the Tube system, where enemies fire from a hurtling train. Maneuvering around oncoming trains and taking constant fire—it's utterly frantic stuff. At one point we race through a crowded station, watching panicked pedestrians run for their lives. It's all impressively rendered and running at a full 60 frames per second, and all told, it's more than enough to make Michael Bay blush.

Five things you need to know about Elite

Your questions answered...

What is the Elite service anyway?
Elite is a separate program that'll cover your entire *Call of Duty* career. Split into four sections: Career, Connect, Compete, and Improve, it lets you create groups and clans of like-minded individuals, keeps a stash of all your stats from *Black Ops* onwards, and helps you analyze your play with graphs and heat maps—which helps improve your game. It also allows access to individual custom classes from any supported platform to make instant changes to weapons and perks from outside the game. Socially speaking, it's essentially *COD* Facebook.

How much will I have to pay for Premium?
Activision won't say yet, but promises to during the final run-up to *MW3's* release. Industry analysts are expecting Premium to cost between $6 and $8 a month. Bearing in mind the average *COD* fanatic buys three DLC packs ($45) a year, an outlay for Elite that lies between $36 and $48 per annum might *not* be that bad a deal. Especially when taking into account the frightening number of hours *COD* players log online.

What will I get if I pay for the Premium service?
Again, there's no official word yet. Career stats and groups, however, will almost certainly be free—meaning that competitions (with real-world prizes), clan support and community/developer-sourced training tips are likely to hide behind the paywall.

What else do I get with the Premium package?
Seeing as you'll be paying a monthly/quarterly/whatever fee, Activision is throwing all their *MW3* DLC packs into the bargain. There's also word of an A-lister-packed *Call of Duty* web TV show that subscribers would get first dibs on.

How do I access it?
It's very much a social media hub, so you can login to Elite from almost anything, including your iPhone or smartphone (other, less attractive smartphones are available), from your PC or Mac or, of course, from your PS3.

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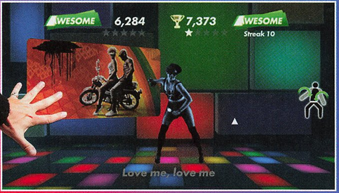
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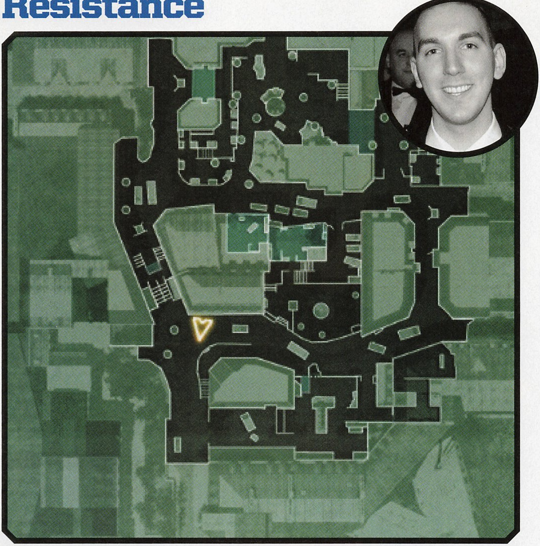

Tips and tactics from Robert Bowling, Creative Strategist, Infinity Ward

The Resistance map is composed of tight streets with even tighter flanking routes through the cafes and lofts that populate the city. The long sight lines of the flanking routes make it an ideal map for assault rifles, so utilize the Two Attachment weapon proficiency to equip the dual scope. This allows you to have both a close-range holographic sight for clearing rooms and a long-range magnified scope for covering the long streets with the same weapon.

However, your offensive strategy is only one-half of the equation to dominating on Resistance, with so many routes through the streets of Paris, getting flanked can be a problem without proper situational awareness. This is where I utilize new equipment such as the Portable Radar. Throw it down near a doorway (I prefer the main center route) and it will alert you to any enemy forces that are trying to flank you while you're moving up or covering the far left or far right streets.

> **"The Two Attachment weapon proficiency allows both a holographic sight and a magnified scope."**

Spec Ops Survival

Spec Ops, the mission-based counterpart to *Call of Duty: World at War's* fan-favorite Zombie mode, was a huge success in *Modern Warfare 2*. It returns in *MW3*, alongside Spec Ops Survival, a wave-based cooperative mode that challenges two players to endure against increasingly overwhelming odds.

Survival mode is played on all the multiplayer maps. It introduces all of the community-based multiplayer features—progressive rankings,

Superior Firepower

Performance-enhancing gear for a competitive edge

PDP Modern Warfare 3 Wireless Controller | $50
This 2.4 Ghz wireless controller borrows the aesthetics of virtual war for its dirty doings. It uses the same analog sticks found in the DualShocks, but with concave caps for improved control. A Satin finish on the grips and bottom cabinet are meant for enhanced feel, and the eight-foot charge cable makes sure we're never out of gas.

Turtle Beach Ear Force Delta headset | $300
This wireless headset comes complete with Bluetooth chat and an *MW3* carrying case. But the best part is the custom MW3 presets, designed by the teams at Infinity Ward and Sledgehammer Games. Who wouldn't want an audio preset that makes it easier to hear footsteps in the jungle?

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Gunnar Optics Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 gaming eyewear | $100
Gunnar Optics glasses are meant for those who spend their entire day staring at screens, and want to avoid the effects of eyestrain. Available exclusively at Best Buy stores, the limited edition *MW3* glasses include custom spring hinges, a magnesium alloy frame, and adjustable nose pads to accommodate a wide range of faces.

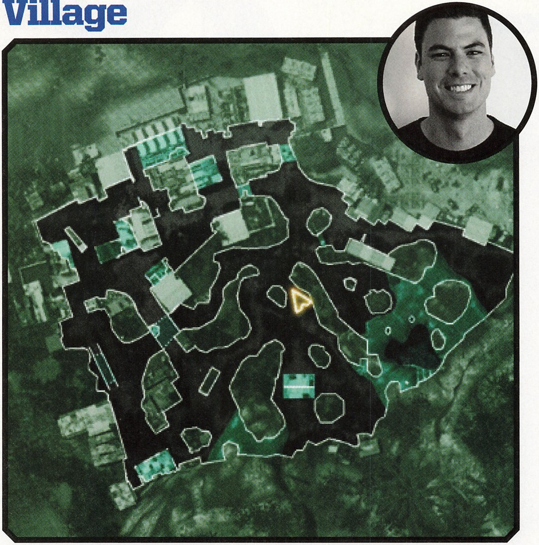
Hori Tactical Assault Commander 3 (T.A.C.) | $100
This mouse-and-keyboard controller offers the advantages of PC controls on the PS3. The mouse sensitivity is adjustable, the wrist pad is removable, and all of the buttons can be re-mapped to preferences. The T.A.C. will be available in two different colors; black and a pixel camouflage design, the latter of which is a Best Buy exclusive for a limited time.

KontrolFreek FPS Freek Prestige | $20
These analog-stick extenders improve players' aiming accuracy. The idea is that lengthening the analog sticks allows for more precise control inputs and an increased range of motion (up a claimed 40 percent).

unlocks, killstreaks, customization of weapons, and more—to the "couch co-op" experience. "And that's great because it allows for a player that maybe plays multiplayer, but isn't a super competitive guy, to experience stuff he's never experienced before—like some of the killstreaks, or the way certain things work," says Bowling. "It also introduces the single player guy, who has never jumped into multiplayer, a chance to get some of those experiences he's never had, and become more competitive in the process if he wants to move into multiplayer."

"The biggest eye-opening moment for me was a while ago, when I was playing Carnival on *MW2*—one of our DLC maps," continues Bowing. "I'm dead, and I'm watching this other dude's kill cam. He's in an AC-130, just raining death down, and I'm like, 'That looks f-king cool. This map looks amazing in an AC-130.' I had never experienced that, and I'm a good player. An AC-130 is just something I don't get a lot. And so I'm like, 'Why can't I, someone who's played hundreds and hundreds of hours of *Modern Warfare 2*, not have that experience?' Spec Ops Survival allows me to have those types of experiences, without having to be in a competitive multiplayer environment against other people. Now I can have it with a friend on my couch or a friend online against A.I. enemies. It's a different flavor, but the same experience."

Village



Tips and tactics from Guy Beahm, Community Manager, Sledgehammer

Village boasts multiple open pathways, an exposed/central space, and various areas that provide different gameplay experiences: this is one map where strategy is really dictated by the player's abilities. Personally I like the mobility and speed that come with the PP90M1 submachine gun: it enables me to push the opposition backwards by continuously attacking with a high rate of fire. Be warned however; if you push too far, you can become vulnerable to an unexpected attack.

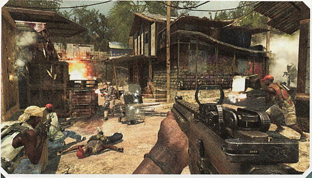
With an intense, open map like Village, Pointstreak rewards really do play a huge role in terms of governing the game. If you're an experienced player that usually hits the higher level Pointstreaks, I'd recommend putting down the Juggernaut suit and rolling with some effective air support such as the AC-130 or Osprey Gunner. Once you have control of the air, you'll have control of the game.

Basic Training

Selecting a class that matches your skillset is a major factor for multiplayer success, but don't become attached to a particular setup—weapons and loadouts should be matched to the strategic requirements of the map and mode you're playing.

Assault
The perfect all-around weapon for short and long range engagements.

SMG
Focused on speed and agility, great for matche requiring lots of running and-gunning. Weak at long ranges.



“With an intense, open map like Village, Pointstreak rewards play a huge role in governing the game.”

LMG
Essential support weapon for providing covering fire, great for Domination. Lacks accuracy.

Shotgun
The close-range combat weapon of choice, clears rooms quickly and easily. Limited by its low magazine capacity.

Sniper
Provides long-range support for run-and-gunners as well as scoping out objective points from afar. Vulnerable to close-range combatants.

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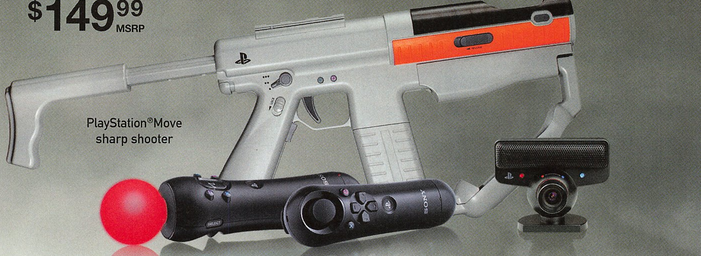
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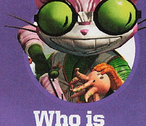
Stealing STEELPORT

PROFESSOR GENKI'S GUIDE TO **SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD's** SYNDICATE SANCTUARY

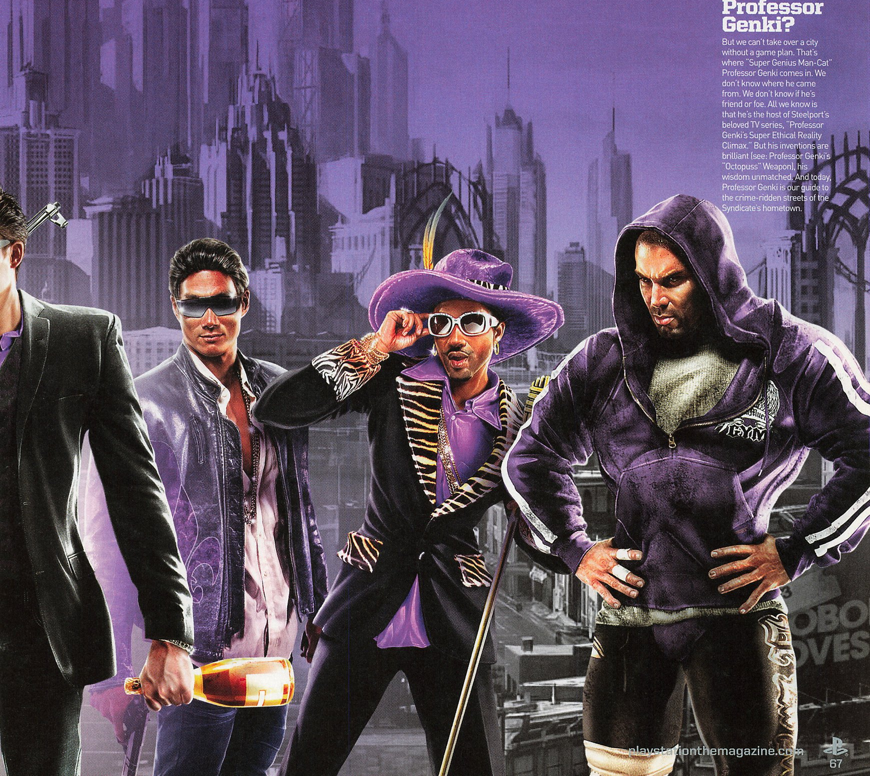
BY RYAN TALJONICK

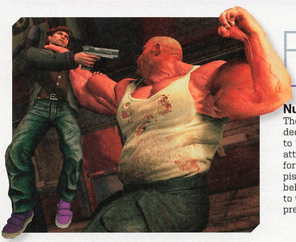
The 3rd Street Saints are at the top of their game. As national superstars with their own line of clothing, energy drinks, and a huge fanbase, the world is at their fingertips. But when the international crime organization known as the Syndicate demands a serious cut of their profits, things get personal. It's time to show the Syndicate just who they're dealing with—time to humiliate them by hitting them where it counts: their home turf, the city of Steelport.



Who is Professor Genki?

But we can't take over a city without a game plan. That's where "Super Genius Man-Cat" Professor Genki comes in. We don't know where he came from. We don't know if he's friend or foe. All we know is that he's the host of Steelport's beloved TV series, "Professor Genki's Super Ethical Reality Climax." But his inventions are brilliant (see: Professor Genki's "Octopuss" Weapon), his wisdom unmatched. And today, Professor Genki is our guide to the crime-ridden streets of the Syndicate's hometown.





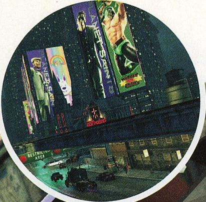
FIGHT DIRTY

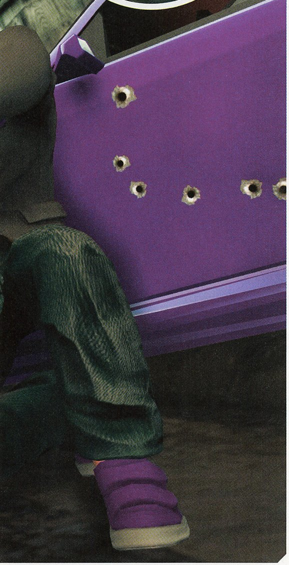
Saints Row: The Third has no shortage of ace-in-the-sleeve antics, especially when it comes to fighting thugs (and hookers) on the streets. Here are some of our favorite methods for making our presence known.

Nutshots
The fact that there's a button solely dedicated to nutshots is testament to *The Third's* fun factor, and these attacks appear in many different forms: sprinting hit-and-run kicks, pistol whips, upper-cut kicks from behind, and straight-on punches to the junk had us giggling like preteens in a sex-ed class.

Takedowns
Beating people senseless is a staple of open-world gameplay, but assaulting Steelport's populace is more enjoyable than ever thanks to hilarious takedowns. We can slam a target's head into the cold, hard pavement, perform running suplexes, and take a brawler to the ground for some up-close, fist-on-face action.

Car theft
Sure, we could pull a gun and steal a vehicle the ol' fashioned way. Or we could jump kick through a car's windshield (while it's in motion, of course) and casually remove its previous occupant. Either way, the Saints know how to steal with style—and a gang's not a gang without an ample supply of style.

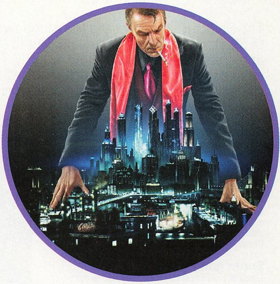




Who's Who

The Syndicate

An extremely powerful international crime organization, the Syndicate is based in Steelport and is controlled by kingpin Phillipe Loren, a Bond-like villain known for his calculated logic and unnerving intelligence. The Syndicate is run more like a corporation than a petty criminal coterie, and the responsibilities of its illegal operations (gun running, human trafficking, drug dealing and the like) are divvied up amongst the three separate gangs that compose the organization: the Morning Star, the Luchadores, and the Deckers.



The Morning Star

Steelport's oldest surviving gang, the Morning Star are of European origin and are known for their highbrow sense of style and ruthless efficiency. They are led by Loren himself and are the operation's leaders and entrepreneurs. While Loren is busy handling Syndicate affairs and outfitting governments and illegal organizations with high-tech weaponry, his beautiful (but deadly) protégés—Viola and Kiki DeWynter—run the prostitution rings.

The Luchadores

Led by the Mexican wrestler Killbane, the masked Luchadores deal primarily in drugs and gambling on the streets of Steelport. They act as the Syndicate's muscle and have a reputation for fighting up close and personal. The Luchadores may be ostentatious, but they are not to be taken lightly.

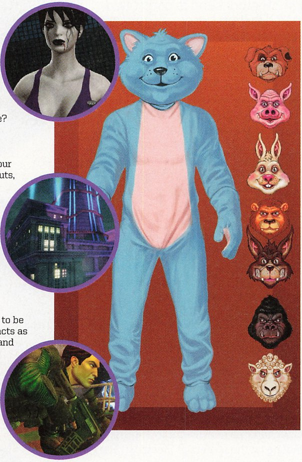
The Deckers

Sometimes running a high-stakes criminal organization requires a more...subtle approach. Enter the Deckers. Controlled by cyber-genius Matt Miller, the Deckers handle the Syndicate's money laundering needs and are an integral part of the organization's security efforts.

> "Welcome to the supreme mind of Super Genius Man-Cat Professor Genki! Steelport is home. Prostitution! Crime! Super Genius TV series, Professor Genki's Super Ethical Reality Climax! Meow!"

RUNNING THE STREETS

The Saints just might have the manpower and cajones to wrestle control of Steelport from the Syndicate. But first they have to establish an identity and create a steady cash flow. Luckily, *The Third* contains plenty of customization options and crazy activities to fuel the 3rd Street Saints' rise to the top of the criminal underworld.



Super gangsters

As the leader of the Saints, we can customize everything about our character, including physical appearance, taunts, poses, and more. Do we play with nothing but a pixelated patch covering our no-no parts? Or do we go all out and transform ourselves into a busty superheroine with metallic blue skin, long dreads, and a raspy male voice? Or maybe...all of the above?

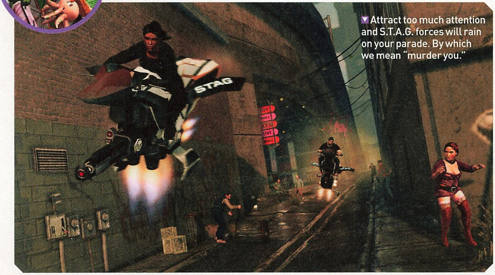
Super gang

Much like *Saints Row 2*, we can choose our gang's visual appearance, weapon loadouts, and stronghold. This time around, however, upgrading our crib adds function to form. Spending money and respect transforms our simple hovels into towering skyscrapers that can house our cache of weapons, vehicles, and more. Unlocking the highest tier of upgrades for our hideouts also nets us monetary bonuses and gameplay perks, such as additional homies for our gang.

Earn respect, get paid

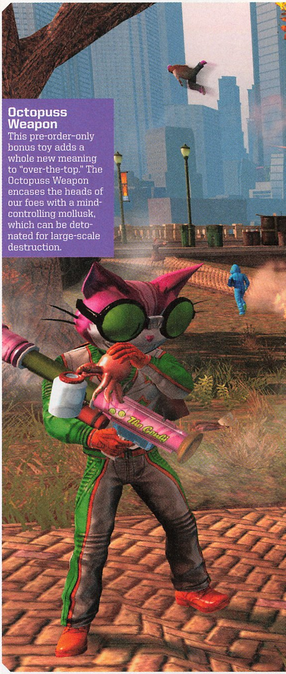
Story missions don't require any respect to be unlocked in *The Third*. Instead, respect acts as a resource for leveling up our character and improving our weapons and abilities. We can unlock a dual-wield skill for specific guns and even purchase the ability to sprint without getting fatigued. Additionally, we can snag some quick cash by participating in any number of illegal activities, which range from old favorites like Insurance Fraud to new opportunities like Tank Mayhem.

> "Super Ethical Professor Genki demands respect, and people obey or pay with their lives! He's stylish! He's handsome! He's Super Genius Man-Cat Professor Genki!"

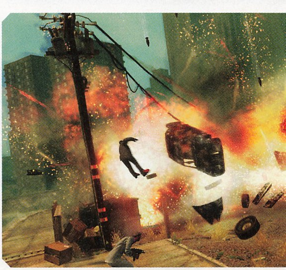


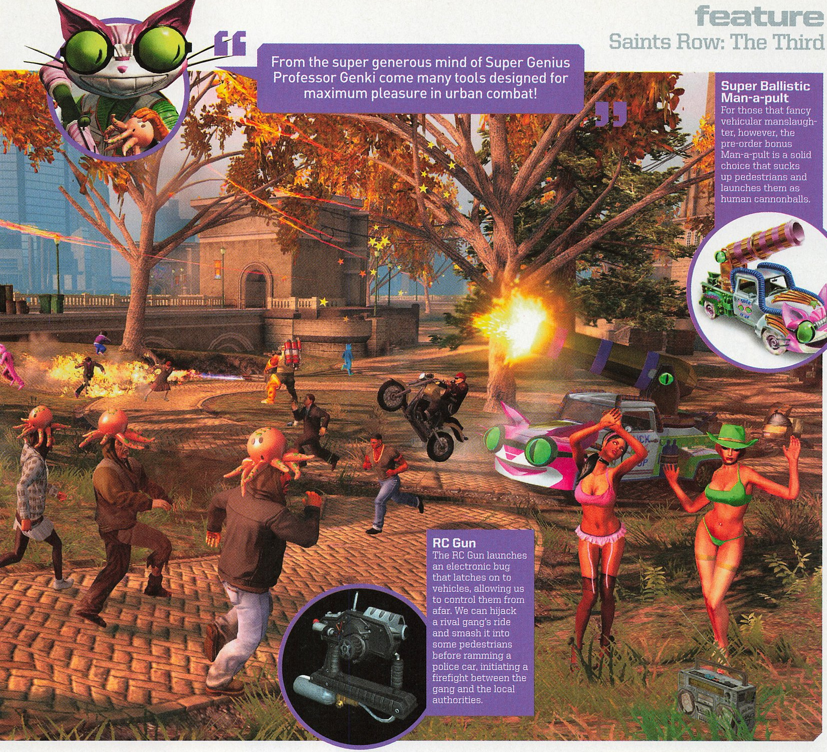
▼Attract too much attention and S.T.A.G. forces will rain on your parade. By which we mean "murder you."

Arms Race



Octopuss Weapon
This pre-order-only bonus toy adds a whole new meaning to "over-the-top." The Octopuss Weapon encases the heads of our foes with a mind-controlling mollusk, which can be detonated for large-scale destruction.

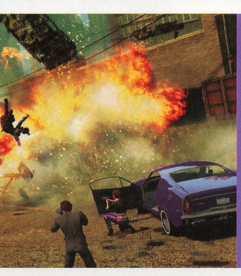




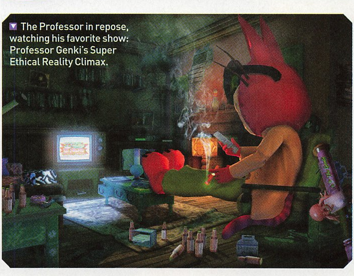
> "From the super generous mind of Super Genius Professor Genki come many tools designed for maximum pleasure in urban combat!"

Super Ballistic Man-a-pult
For those that fancy vehicular manslaughter, however, the pre-order bonus Man-a-pult is a solid choice that sucks up pedestrians and launches them as human cannonballs.

RC Gun
The RC Gun launches an electronic bug that latches on to vehicles, allowing us to control them from afar. We can hijack a rival gang's ride and smash it into some pedestrians before ramming a police car, initiating a firefight between the gang and the local authorities.



Airstrike
Sometimes conventional firearms just don't pack enough punch. Luckily, the Saints have nigh-unlimited access to resources, including the ability to call in laser-guided airstrikes. Don't take on the Luchadores with a paltry peashooter—rain death from above instead!



▼ The Professor in repose, watching his favorite show: Professor Genki's Super Ethical Reality Climax.

In the Works

Apoco-fists
Imagine the world-ending apocalypse infused into a pair of oversized costume fists—punching people with a pair of these bad boys results in a glorious explosion of blood and gore...and certain victory!

Predator Drone
Sure, an airstrike is an effective means of clearing traffic and large groups of evildoers. Sometimes, though, we prefer to show our victims that we care by personally delivering remote-controlled missiles to their doorstep.

TEN NEW PS3 Games That Dare TO BE DIFFERENT

Looking for something beyond the usual shooters, slashers, and smashers? These 10 new games aim to shake up gaming's status quo.

BY KIMBERLEY WALLACE

PUB **2K GAMES** DEV **IRRATIONAL GAMES** RELEASE **2012**

1 BIOSHOCK INFINITE

WHAT IS IT? This third *BioShock* game explores new territory: the sky. Neither a prequel nor a sequel, it's a self-contained title that explores completely new characters and time eras.
HOW IT'S DIFFERENT Elizabeth, the girl at the center of protagonist Booker DeWitt's story, can bend time and space—but she doesn't have complete control of her powers yet...
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Mimic our favorite supergeek, *Heroes*' Hiro Nakamura, and explore Elizabeth's mysterious powers.

PUB **BETHESDA SOFTWORKS** DEV **ID SOFTWARE** RELEASE **OCTOBER**

2

RAGE

WHAT IS IT? Id's first fresh IP in 15 years. Successfully mastering the blend of FPS and high-octane racing elements is the key to surviving *Rage's* open world.
HOW IT'S DIFFERENT Shooting and driving games collide in the post-apocalypse, but think more *Mad Max* than *Fallout*. Still not convinced? Multiplayer missions are tailored to further explore characters' stories.
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Jump into a car and explore *Rage's* decimated world to see if it can surpass *Borderlands* and *Fallout 3*. We'll take along the Wingstick, a boomerang-like weapon, in case we run into trouble.

3

SSX

WHAT IS IT? EA Sports is radically rebooting its classic snowboarding franchise with more realistic environments. The Survive It mode focuses on the most extreme aspects of the sport. Avalanches anyone?
HOW IT'S DIFFERENT It reshapes the Earth. *SSX's* mountains are based on topographical data, but change their shape during play. Landing an Uber Trick causes a shockwave that alters the track in real time, opening new paths and challenges.
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Hit the slopes as Kaori and see if we can change the face of Mount Everest with an Uber Trick.

PUB **EA SPORTS** DEV **EA CANADA** RELEASE **JANUARY 2012**

PUB **NAMCO BANDAI** DEV **FROM SOFTWARE** RELEASE **OCTOBER**

5

DARK SOULS

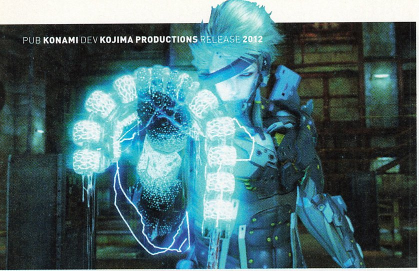
WHAT IS IT? The follow-up to the ridiculously difficult *Demon's Souls, Dark Souls* will be even harder, which is insane. Despite its masochistic bent, every death marks a lesson to be learned.
HOW'S IT DIFFERENT Whether using the game's messaging system or touching bloodstains to discover how others met their demise, there's a big focus on community to overcome challenges.
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Explore some of the evil classes, like the Pyromancer and the Black Knight. Who wants to be a good guy all the time?

PUB **EA** DEV **38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGE GAMES** RELEASE **FEBRUARY 2012**

4

KINGDOMS OF AMULAR: RECKONING

WHAT IS IT? A new take on RPGs featuring fast-paced, combo-driven combat.
HOW IT'S DIFFERENT In-game choices shape destinies that change the available skills. With these skills, players can create screen-filling attacks to tear down monstrous enemies.
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Create a character that would put Dante and Kratos to shame—then watch the blood fly.


PUB **KONAMI** DEV **KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS** RELEASE **2012**

6

METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING

WHAT IS IT? A *Metal Gear* spin-off starring Raiden. If *Rising's* Zan-Datsu system—which has Raiden cutting open enemies and absorbing their innards—is an indication, it should be quite gruesome.
HOW IT'S DIFFERENT Its amazing physics allow direct control over Raiden's high-frequency blade to slice anything and everything.
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Try to imitate Blendtec's "Will It Blend?" videos on every object we come across.

7

STARHAWK

WHAT IS IT? A successor to top-seller *Warhawk*, *Starhawk* hasn't lost its vehicular roots. But the classic third-person gameplay now features new tower-defense–style strategy elements.
HOW IT'S DIFFERENT Unlike its multiplayer-only predecessor, *Starhawk* features an offline single-player campaign. Online hasn't lost a step, though, as players can now build structures, such as walls and sniper nests.
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Do so much building we'll have to apply for a contractor's license, and then blow everything to microscopic bits.

PUB **SCEA** DEV **LIGHTBOX INTERACTIVE** RELEASE **2012**

PUB **SQUARE ENIX** DEV **IO INTERACTIVE** RELEASE **2012**

8

HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

WHAT IS IT? A major shift in the *Hitman* franchise. Rather than being the man with the bounty list, Agent 47 is the one with a target on his back.
HOW IT'S DIFFERENT It's changing a successful formula. Agent 47's never really been a hero, but now he's cast as the villain. He's bulked up, upping his aggression and brutality as he creates makeshift weapons.
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Explore Agent 47's new world and murderous abilities. With Chicago's police after us, we might need to snap a few more necks...

9

XCOM

WHAT IS IT? Coming from 2K Marin (creators of *BioShock 2*), *XCOM* combines shooter thrills with its PC namesake's classic tactical gameplay.
HOW IT'S DIFFERENT Since alien technology can be harvested and turned into advanced weaponry, players use their heads as much as their guns.
WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST See what kinds of weapons we can create. Once we've got rayguns, the sky's the limit—with bigger and better guns galore.

PUB **2K GAMES** DEV **2K MARIN** RELEASE **MARCH 2012**

10

TOMB RAIDER

WHAT IS IT? This franchise reboot lets players experience the roots of Lara Croft's treasure hunter career. She wasn't always a dauntless, ultra-confident heroine.

HOW IT'S DIFFERENT It promises a deeper connection to Lara, with the end goal of being as realistic as possible. This extends into the game: if Lara gets hurt, expect that injury to not only be visible, but also affect how she moves.

WHAT WE'LL DO FIRST Discover if Lara Croft really does have a vulnerable side. Oh, and see if 21- year-old Lara is prone to some regrettable lapses in judgment.

PUB **SQUARE ENIX** DEV **CRYSTAL DYNAMICS** RELEASE **2012**

Available Now

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Portal 2
Spatial reasoning at its finest, it exempifies brains over brawn.

Catherine
Relationship mind games and night-marish puzzles.

Shadows of the Damned
Whacky, weird, demon-killing with double entendres galore.

L.A. Noire
Read facial expressions to interrorgate crime suspects.

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1
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PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

While traditional perceptions might stereotype gamers as anti-social loners, gaming these days is as much about connection as it is about high scores and "winning the game." It's such a self-evident phenomenon that most of you probably uttered something like "No kidding," while reading that last sentence.

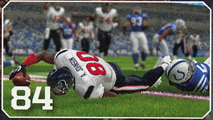
So how do *you* choose to connect? Head-tohead competition? Cooperative play? Shared emotional experiences? Whatever your preferred mode of interaction, this month's selection of hot new titles has you covered.

Why not get schooled by a master in *Street Fighter III: Third Strike Online*, or tackle your dreams of athletic glory in *Madden NFL 12* or *NHL 12* while trash talking your buddy's roster? Better still, band together to defend the Earth against *Resistance 3's* alien invaders and *Dead Island's* unstoppable zombie horde.

No Internet connection? No problem! After being emotionally drained by *The Ico & Shadow of the Colossus Collection*, you'll have no choice but to seek out a friend for support. But if you do play online, just remember Penny Arcade's simple advice: "Don't be a dick."

DEAD ISLAND

No, see, the island itself isn't dead. It's just an island. Now the zombies *on* the island...well, they're more like *undead* aren't they? What gives?!



MADDEN NFL 12

Are you ready for some football? Too bad! Football's ready for some of you, so strap on those cleats, chest bump your bros, and get psyched for game time.

WARHAMMER 40,000: SPACE MARINE

We were trying to figure out how to spell out the sound of an Ork being cleaved in two by a chainsaw sword, but you may just have to hear it for yourself.

How we score our reviews...

10	**Awesome**	Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.
9	**Excellent**	Highly recommended and a great investment.
8	**Great**	Wonderful yet possesses minor flaws.
7	**Good**	Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.
6	**Acceptable**	A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.
5	**Mediocre**	A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.
4	**Flawed**	Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.
3	**Poor**	A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.
2	**Awful**	A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.
1	**Raw Sewage**	Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.

Unlike Hale, Capelli is purely human, which explains why his health doesn't regenerate.

Resistance 3

Straightforward brutality

Info

PS3
RESISTANCE 3

Format PS3
Pub SCEA
Dev Insomniac Games
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like every other shooter, but done right.

Why do people go see the same summer action movies year after year? Entertainment, pure and simple. The plots are thin but the explosions are big, so the audience comes, gets exactly the kind of adrenaline rush it expects, and leaves feeling satisfied. *Resistance 3* is a summer action movie, and very good one, at that. It's an unapologetic shooter by numbers, but one whose lack of originality is offset by its deft execution. Oh, and by its giant alien monster battles. Did we mention the giant alien monster battles?

As in past *Resistance* games, the sinister Chimera have pushed humanity to the brink of extinction, turning 1950s America into a giant militarized wasteland. This time, however, Insomniac Games strives to create a more personal experience by focusing on former Sentinel Joseph Capelli and his young family instead of Nathan Hale and his cadre of super-soldiers. When the familiar Dr. Malikov shows up at Capelli's tiny Oklahoma stronghold claiming he's discovered an imminent Chimeran threat in New York City, Capelli reluctantly leaves his wife and son in order to pursue his dreams of Broadway stardom...er, to save mankind.

While the results are only slightly more emotionally impactful than previous *Resistance* plots, the game consistently reinforces the notion of a single man facing impossible odds, making our eventual triumph that much more satisfying. Sure, the story is predictable, but it effectively drives the experience forward (and offers some unexpected twists along the way) while gracefully setting the stage for the real star: the action.

Machinegun Etiquette

In many ways, *Resistance 3's* gameplay seems like it stepped right out of the '90s: oversized bosses with glowing weakpoints, a life bar that can only be replenished by scattered health packs, nearly a dozen wild weapons on hand at all times, an arcadey damage

Cheaters Prosper Our five favorite unlockable cheats

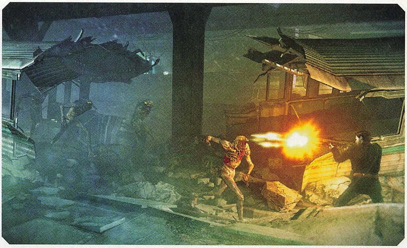
1 **All Weapons** Automatically unlocks all weapons at the beginning of the game instead of having to earn them gradually.

2 **Infinite Ammo** Grants an unlimited supply of grenades and ammo, thus putting the focus on fun instead of scouring for supplies.

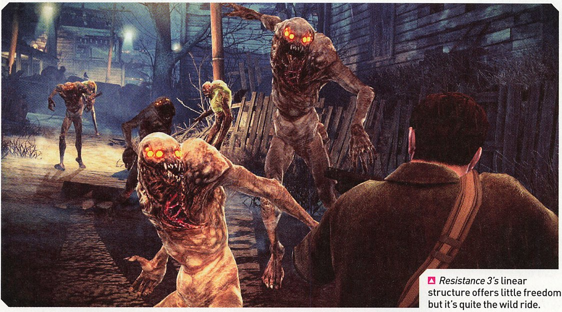
3 **Health Regen** Turns on regenerating health so simply crouching behind cover heals us, *Resistance 2*-style.

4 **Mirror Mode** Flips the world horizontally to make the experience feel entirely new...or just really confusing.

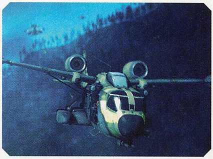
5 **Immersive** Removes health and ammo displays from the screen, requiring us to rely on instinct.



▲ Playing with a co-op buddy doesn't change the game's campaign, but partners can revive each other as they battle the Chimera.

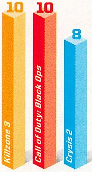


▲ *Resistance 3's* linear structure offers little freedom, but it's quite the wild ride.

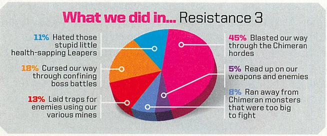


system that treats headshots more like a slap in the face than an instant kill—it's downright old school and a notable departure from the decidedly modern *Resistance 2*.

Yet, the gameplay feels deliberately classic rather than outdated. The non-regenerating health system forced us to constantly push forward, creating chaos and excitement while never becoming too overwhelming. The game's perfect pacing also provided a great sense of variety throughout: New weapons, enemy types, and combat scenarios cropped up just often enough to keep things interesting, and when trigger tedium began to set in, we'd encounter a massive set piece or boss battle that would completely blow us away. Imagine capturing and holding an enemy base *entirely by yourself.* Our knuckles are still white from that one.



ScorePole
Resistance 3 holds its own in the competitive first-person shooter category.



More than anything else, the weapons make the experience. From old favorites like the Magnum (exploding rounds!) to new entries like the empowering Deadeye sniper rifle and the bad guy-frying Atomizer, every firearm functions in a unique and satisfying way. Experimenting with all the secondary fire options and gradually earning passive upgrades through extended use adds some pure, unmistakable fun back into a genre that's become too self-serious. Watching an enemy burst into flames after getting nailed with a shotgun blast is the essence of gaming fun.

Typically Exceptional

Aside from its imaginative weaponry, however, *Resistance 3* exhibits little originality. Its overall design is incredibly tight and cohesive, but it also rehashes every shooter cliché in the book: forced stealth and rail shooting sections, missions that never stray from the standard "kill all these dudes" and "get here and survive" objectives, critical elevators that (surprise!) must be reactivated before use—hell, the only thing missing is a bullet-time mechanic.

The same can be said of the game's multiplayer. While it contains a few clever abilities that capitalize on the unique firearms, it falls short on innovation. With five basic game types, standard eight-on-eight team sizes (down from last game's unruly 30-on-30 matches), and the obligatory *Modern Warfare*-esque upgrade system, *Resistance 3's* multiplayer falls perfectly in line with modern expectations but does little to elevate itself.

Resistance 3 does everything we expect, and it does it all very, very well. Its sky-high production values and focused design create a to-the-point experience that's predictable, but also massive, exciting, and predictably, a whole lot of fun. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

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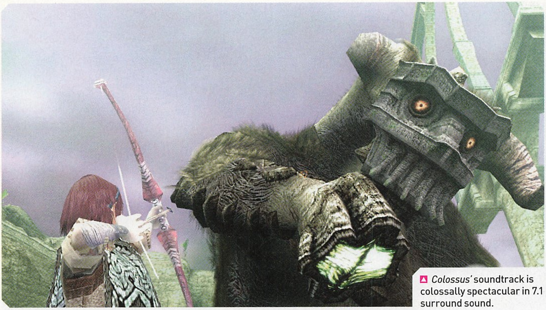
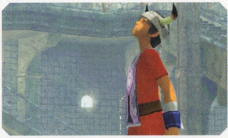


Colossus' soundtrack is colossally spectacular in 7.1 surround sound.

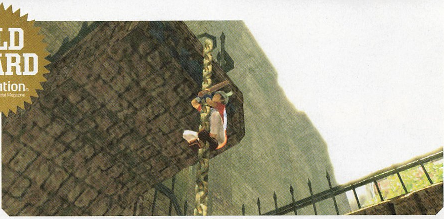
Young Ico is a village outcast who helps the mysterious Yorda escape her imprisonment.



The Ico & Shadow of the Colossus Collection

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation The Official Magazine

A brilliant, emotional rollercoaster



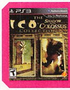
More extras

Besides HD, 3D, and Trophies, the collection's only added content consists of two dynamic XMB themes and a few additional in-game video sequences. We would have loved deleted scenes or extra gameplay—fan service befitting of these revered games.

While some games call out for an HD re-release, others absolutely demand it. *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus* fall into the second category. The two don't technically occupy the same universe (a point of contention among fans), but they have much in common: similar environments, comparable graphical styles, unorthodox gameplay. Most importantly, though, there's a good chance they'll both make you cry.

Because of their unique elements and unconventional gameplay, many people skipped these games when they were originally released for PlayStation 2. But those who played them loved them, and those who didn't often felt like they had missed the boat. Now that they're on the PS3 with HD graphics, Trophies, and support for 3D TVs, there's no longer any reason not to fall in love.

In *Ico*, we control the titular protagonist, a young boy exiled from his village due to the horns protruding from his head. After escaping from his prison, he comes across Yorda, a captive girl who speaks a strange language and glows with an otherworldly light. Stick in hand (seriously, he uses a piece of wood for a weapon), Ico frees and guides Yorda, protecting her from the shadowy fiends trying to pull her into the dark abyss. It might sound monotonous, but the puzzle-platformer gameplay is remarkably strong and the visuals now look substantially better than the original PS2 game. Loading screens are much more abundant than in most modern games and there are some mechanics that now feel a bit dated, but nothing can diminish the game's extreme emotional resonance.



Info
Format PS3
Pub SCEA **Dev** Bluepoint Games
Price $39.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like two beautiful games that now look good as well.

In contrast, *Shadow of the Colossus* feels much more akin to modern games, both in terms of its astounding visuals and solid gameplay. As Wander, we travel into the Forbidden Land to ask the mysterious Dormin to use its powers to revive a girl named Mono. It agrees on the condition that Wander destroy the 16 colossi who inhabit the land. With little more than a sword, a bow, and a horse, Wander must literally scale the beasts and plunge his sword into the glowing runes located around their enormous bodies. It's a mechanic that's been often emulated since the game's release, but so far nothing has succeeded in providing the thrills of *Colossus*. It's an absolute masterpiece, and seeing it in HD makes the atmospheric world even more impactful.

Both games are certifiable classics, and the HD visuals amplify all of the emotion Team Ico tenderly weaved into them. Having grown protective of Yorda when we first played *Ico*, we were shaking when she was snatched away in HD. And having felt remorse while slaying colossi in *Shadow of the Colossus*, we were bawling as they crumbled to the ground in 1080p. If you have no idea why someone would experience regret killing a boss or be protective of a videogame character, well, then there's the quite the journey ahead of you.

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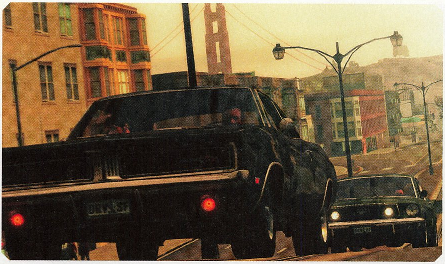
HOLLANDER COOPER



Driver
San Francisco

Ride-along with the dream police

Typically when a story pulls the "It was all just a dream" card, it waits until the very end to reveal its hackneyed twist. *Driver: San Francisco*, on other hand, takes a different route. Three months after the events of *Driv3r*, crime lord Charles Jericho escapes from prison and the ensuing chase lands Detective John Tanner in a life-threatening coma. Rather than miraculously pulling through and continuing to fight crime in the real world, Tanner takes on dream evil by attempting to find Jericho in his sleep.

Driver is split into Story Missions and City Missions, and both must be completed in order to uncover information regarding Jericho's whereabouts. When we rescue a kidnapped scientist or tail an assassin through the city, we get closer to solving Tanner's mystery. The game both feels and plays like a cop drama, but some of the side missions take away from the urgent nature of finding Jericho and waking Tanner from his coma. It's tough to maintain a connection with a serious plot when we're helping kids pay for college by winning underground races for them. That said, the side missions are rarely repetitive and the variety of chases, races, stunts, and yes, even the occasional tailing missions were enjoyable.

Unlike *Driv3r*, we can no longer exit vehicles á la *Grand Theft Auto*, but a new ability called Shift lets Tanner hop into the car (and body) of most any other driver to explore the expansive San Francisco Bay Area setting. As we progress through the game, Shift evolves, allowing us to rapidly jump from partner to partner during a car chase or view the city from a different perspective as we float above it incorporeally. In the context of Tanner's comatose state, Shift made perfect sense, and we never found ourselves questioning the logic, as we might have in other driving games.

Still, minor annoyances keep *Driver* from being stellar: some areas of the city must be unlocked via story progression, fishtailing is occasionally over-the-top and loathsome during races and chases, and Shift is inexplicably limited during certain missions. However, the narrative-driven style, wide array of online options, and Film Director mode—which lets us film our own stunts and post them online—make it an entertaining and unique take on the driving genre. ANNE LEWIS

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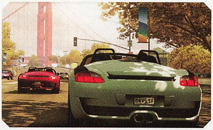
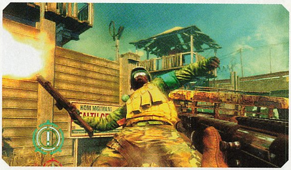
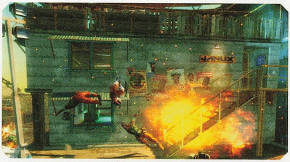


Real San Franciscans know this is the sunniest you'll ever see the city.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft Reflections
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like every '70s cop show ever seen, heard of, or imagined.

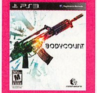




Bodycount

Putting the "S" back in FPS

Info



Format PS3
Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters Guildford
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like the shooter for those who can't be bothered with details.

If its to-the-point title doesn't effectively reveal what Codemasters' new shooter is all about, its opening moments should do the trick. Rather than arming players with a pea-shooting pistol, *Bodycount* immediately puts new recruits behind a high-powered shotgun and in front of a nest of exploding barrels. So, yeah, *Bodycount's* all about stacking corpses like sardines.

It's not merely a bullet fodder-filled shooting gallery though. On the contrary, *Bodycount's* a smart first-person shooter that simply doesn't have the patience for the cinematic scripted events, slick cutscenes, and token turret missions that have diluted the genre's kill-it-if-it-moves core. It forgoes the blockbuster-ish bells and whistles in favor of pure trigger-pulling bliss, excising the flashy fat while focusing on a few key concepts: gloriously destructible environments, a solid arsenal of hot-lead sprayers, and arcadey gameplay that's more about engaging thumbs than minds.

Its detail-starved environments and lackluster narrative can't compete with its contemporaries' richly rendered worlds, but *Bodycount's* back-to-basics approach shines like a welcome beacon of simple fun in a sea of increasingly complex shooters. MATT CABRAL

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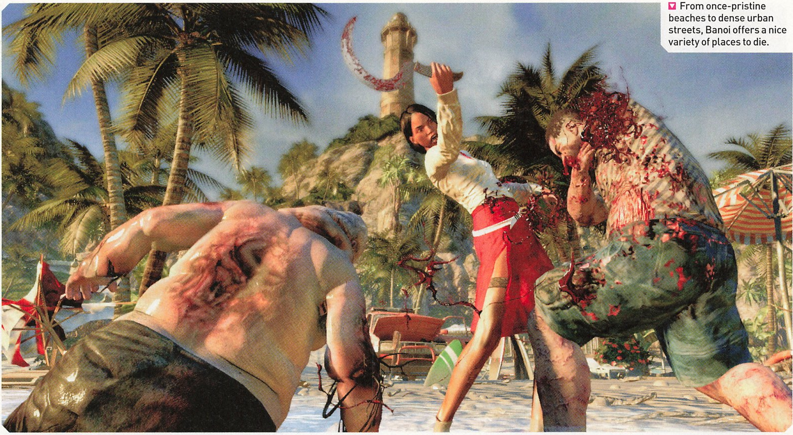


From once-pristine beaches to dense urban streets, Banoi offers a nice variety of places to die.

Dead Island

Even the walking dead need a vacation sometimes

Info

PS3
DEAD ISLAND

Format PS3
Pub Deep Silver
Dev Techland
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like every zombie movie ever, except it's on a tropical island.

We have a love/hate relationship with zombie games. Sure they're fun, but their numbers increase almost as rapidly as the shambling undead themselves. As a result, we've had plenty of time to develop a serious case of zombie fatigue. Yet *Dead Island*—a *Borderlands*-style first-person shooter meets zombie RPG—asks a few important questions that help it stand apart from the typical shoot-'em-in-the-head affair: What happens if the zombie apocalypse hits while we're thousands of miles from our detailed survival guides and expertly planned preparedness kits? What do we do when firearms are a luxury and ammo is scarce? As vacationers on the resort island of Banoi, we find ourselves in this exact situation, conveniently immune to the effects of zombification.

Dead Island is overflowing with tense atmosphere, brutal combat, and arresting environments. We spent our first few hours just exploring Banoi's once-gorgeous resort, occasionally helping others to earn wads of cash and weapon modifications—like pointy nails to jam in our bat for extra damage.

Weapon variety and upgrade options add depth to *Dead Island's* fun, melee-focused combat. Our weapons deteriorate with use, requiring costly repairs to maintain, and the stamina mechanic dictates how frequently we can attack before we need to stop to catch our breath, but this simply prevents the game from devolving into a mindless slugfest. Taking on flesh-eating monsters toe-to-toe remains one of the game's greatest draws.

Island Tours

During our quest to survive, we

Safety In Numbers Five important co-op play facts

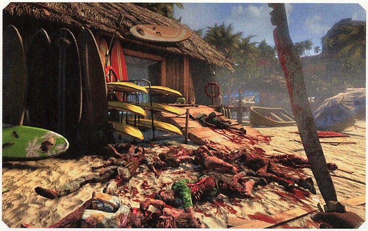
1 **Join in** We can always join our friends' games regardless of where in the story they've progressed to.

2 **Power up** Even when joining a game at a different part of the story, we can still gain XP, cash, and items scaled to our level.

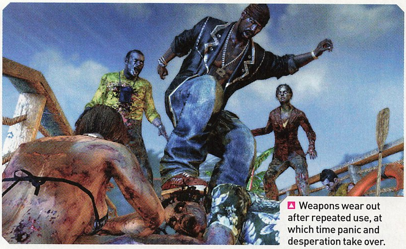
3 **Search** From weapons to mod materials, there's plenty of loot to go around for those willing to thoroughly explore Banoi.

4 **Collaborate** Each character has unique skills and weapon proficiencies that can benefit the team as a whole.

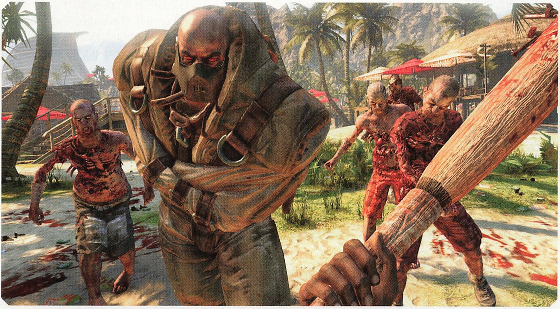
5 **Survive** The number and strength of zombies increases depending on the number and the level of the players in a game.

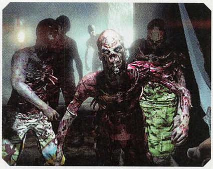


▼ The Ram is one of five special zombies that are extra excited to munch on our brains. Don't ask where he got that straight jacket. Gift shop, maybe?

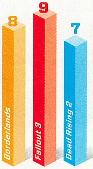


▲ Weapons wear out after repeated use, at which time panic and desperation take over.





encountered several pockets of human resistance, most of which had no shortage of tasks for us to complete in exchange for a multitude of rewards. Many folks sent us on mundane fetch errands or frustrating escort missions, but others made requests that packed a surprising amount of emotional weight. A man pleaded that we find his infected wife and daughter in the city and put them out of their misery, while another woman begged us to find her asthmatic daughter an inhaler, lest she die from her seemingly manageable affliction.



ScorePole

A first-person zombie RPG, *Dead Island* can stand with other zombie slayers, but falls short of the top roleplayers.

Yet the difficulty of some of these missions and the sheer number of zombies that inhabit the later portions of the game make one thing clear: *Dead Island* was built for four-player co-op and punishes those who play alone. In fact, all four protagonists appear in every cutscene, regardless of how many actual players are actively participating in the game. We even reached a point in the main quest that was impossible to complete without co-op assistance, though the developers tell us this problem will be addressed in a day-one patch.

Party Time

Thankfully, the co-op component functions beautifully—assuming three other people are available to play. Quest rewards, experience points, and cash pickups are awarded in full to everyone in the party, and plentiful loot drops meant we didn't have to quarrel over who should get that slightly less-damaged weapon. Each character has a slightly different skill set and is proficient with a particular weapon type, and we can allot skill points to a variety of perks, including increased health regeneration, firearm accuracy, or melee stamina for increased survivablilty.

While character progression is certainly useful, it never makes enough of an impact to really encourage different styles of play in co-op sessions. Even though each character is tailored for a specific role (like "tanking" or providing passive party buffs), we mostly just ran around bashing everything that moved.

We enjoyed our time on Banoi, but it falls short of being a gaming paradise. It's an uneven experience that's better with friends and more memorable for its massacring elements than its story and characters. Perhaps that's simply true of zombie-centric media in general: It's fun, it's gory, but how much depth can we reasonably expect from the undead? Fortunately, there's little time for such philosophical musing when we're busy hacking away at zombie hordes. **RYAN TALJONICK**

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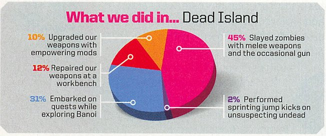
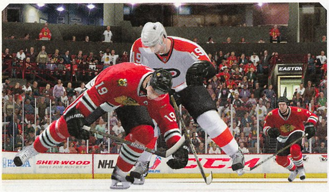
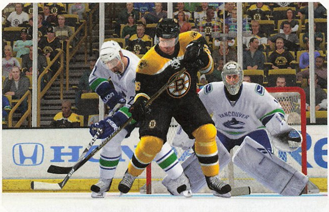
What we did in... Dead Island





NHL 12 inherits many of *FIFA*'s online innovations this year, including an Ultimate Team card game and online league play.



NHL 12

The puck stops here

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** EA Sports
Dev EA Canada **Price** $59.99
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like a dynasty that has to find new ways to challenge itself.

Hockey, of all the major sports, has enjoyed the most successful translation into videogame form but has always struggled to achieve meaningful year-to-year improvements as a result. It's a challenge that *NHL 12* meets with smarter A.I. players, dynamic goalies, and a new full-contact physics engine.

The improved A.I. now better anticipates the flow of play, further blurring the line between virtual and real hockey. We couldn't recall a moment when a play's outcome was thwarted by teammate idiocy. The option to assume full manual control of the goalie—who now actively battles encroaching opponents in the crease—adds another satisfying sim layer for those who desire it. And with its more diverse and realistic portrayal of player collisions and puck reactions, the new physics engine also contributes to the overall evolutionary refinement.

In some instances when the puck meets a player's stick, however, the physics still defy reality. On more than one occasion, we watched dumbstruck as a player with no vision on the puck somehow corralled a pass at an improbable angle before redirecting it into an impossible shot on goal. It's the type of outcome that enrages the defense and should embarrass the undeserving offense—it's a regrettable flaw in the otherwise exemplary gameplay.

Factor in the additional Be a GM, Be a Pro, and unlockable Be a Legend modes and the depth of *NHL 12's* experience is near unmatched. This EA Sports hallmark continues to be an essential for hockey fans and sports gamers alike. **ROGER BURCHILL**

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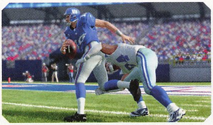

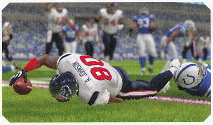

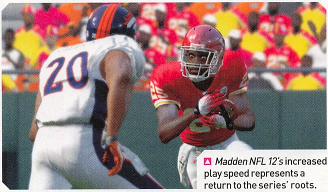

Madden NFL 12's increased play speed represents a return to the series' roots.

Madden NFL 12

More speed than a hurry-up offense

In previous iterations of *Madden*, EA Sports slowed down the speed of the action in an attempt to emphasize more realistic play. No more. This year, the higher speeds return, so the running game feels more aggressive and the passing game feels more urgent. Yes, it comes off a tad bit more arcadey, and yes, *Madden* purists might turn up their noses, but the on-field action is engaging in a shout-at-the-screen way that the best *Maddens* have always delivered. When combined with further enhancements made to the tackling system, the end result is a game that embodies the brutal intensity of the NFL.

Thankfully, this boost in intensity comes with a few much-needed A.I. improvements. On defense, we were thrilled to watch our linebackers and secondary make intuitive adjustments in zone coverage. And even with five-minute quarters, the late-game A.I. now makes the kind of hurry-up decisions most of us would make with the game clock ticking down.

Several new features also make franchise play more rewarding: *Madden* vets will greatly appreciate the faster free-agent bidding process, which creates more tension between teamsand preseason roster cuts also add a more human element. The presence of a confidence rating that affects players' abilities is interesting, though perhaps a bit too subtle.

Our only major substantive complaint is the repetitive audio commentary, but that's easy to ignore. **GEORGE JONES**

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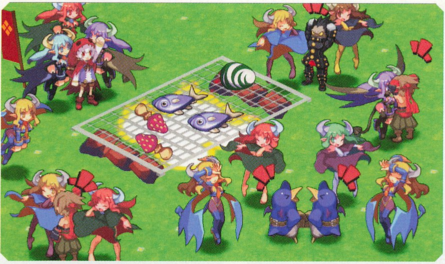
Info

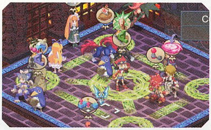
Format PS3
Pub EA Sports
Dev Tiburon
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like classic *Madden* done better than ever.



Disgaea 4

A Promise Unforgotten

Because strategy fans never forget



Picking up allies and chucking them around the battlefield makes for a great way to move.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** NIS America
Dev Nippon Ichi Software
Price $49.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like tactical combat as OCD therapy...if that makes sense.

Few subtitles are as schmaltzy as "A Promise Unforgotten," but if it helps mitigate the effect at all, the promise in question concerns a mess of free sardines.

Disgaea fans will see the joke coming, and they'll also have a good idea of what to expect from the game as a whole. As with the rest of the series, *Disgaea 4* takes turn-based combat to a dangerous extreme. It's another game for people who racked up 100-plus hours with *Final Fantasy Tactics*. It's another joke played at the expense of the genre. Yet behind that lies a straight-faced, dead-serious game.

While *Disgaea 3's* graphics weren't quite as high-def as they should have been—having clearly started life on the PS2—part four solves this problem with sharp new sprites and backgrounds. The strategy sim underneath, on the other hand, has become even denser: The Senate voting scheme has a new online component that allows other players to ship characters over to vote in our elections. There's a long-awaited level editor that's great for building Geo Panel puzzles. The party crews a pirate ship for player-versus-player battles (seriously), and on and on...

Those details only mean so much, however, because at a fundamental level, *Disgaea* is still *Disgaea*. When we think about it, this is some deeply weird game design. Played at a basic level of skill by someone who likes, say, *Tactics Ogre* but didn't spend 300 hours grinding up his party, it's not actually that much fun. It's tuned for a fairly rough difficulty level, the interface controls are clumsy, over-complicated, and all the layers of extra meta-gameplay can seem like a confusing waste of time.

The purpose behind the design doesn't reveal itself until it's put to the test by someone committed to completely breaking the game, someone who wants to root around in its guts until every last little exploitable loophole is uncovered. All the extra complexity turns out to be a feature not a bug, at least for players mad enough to appreciate it.

Sane people, in short, may want to try something simpler. For the committed few, though, time with *Disgaea 4* should pleasantly relieve the terrible pressures produced by the voices inside their heads. **DAVID F. SMITH**

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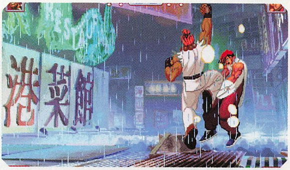

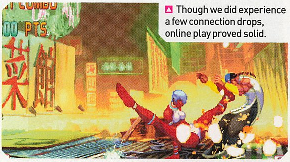

Though we did experience a few connection drops, online play proved solid.

Street Fighter III

Third Strike Online

The rebirth of a champion

Info

Format PSN
Pub Capcom
Dev Capcom/
Iron Galaxy Studios
Price $14.99
ESRB Teen
It's like some kind of brutal martial arts training ritual.

There's something very special about a game that makes us want to keep playing despite being absolutely terrible at it. *Street Fighter III* has always been one of those games. Though nowhere near as ubiquitous as *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*, *SFIII*'s meticulously deep mechanics arguably surpass those of *SFII* and have earned the game a diehard following that's barely waned since its 1997 release.

But the same mechanics that make it brilliant also make it somewhat inaccessible. Combo inputs often demand such pixel-accurate spacing and split-second timing that newbies might struggle to score a single blow against experienced players. As a result, however, the payoff is immeasurably satisfying for those who really commit to learning the game.

Veterans will be pleased to know that *Online* is indeed an arcade-perfect port of the original *Third Strike* (itself the third iteration of *SFIII*), backed up by all new netcode that virtually eliminates lag. Coupled with the comprehensive inclusion of every extra and option imaginable, *Online* serves as a perfect service for the hardcore and a welcome opportunity for brave newcomers. Just be prepared to get worked. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

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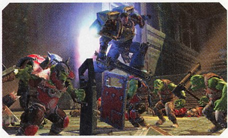
No, this isn't the Rapture, but it could well be the beginning of the end.

Orks and Chaos enemies may come in a variety of ugly shapes and sizes, but they're all just begging to meet the buzzing end of our Chainsword.



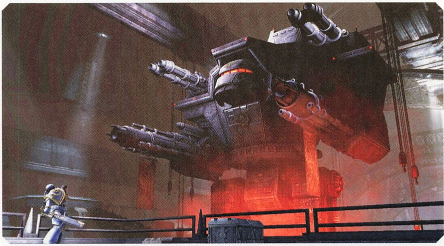
Warhammer 40,000
Space Marine

Sword, meet chainsaw

Online killing
Robust customization options with character- and weapon-specific perks, allow players to personalize the heck out of their online Space Marines (what's better than hot pink armor?) Also, the solo campaign's coolest toys—jump packs and chainswords—put a fresh spin on 8-vs.-8 competitive modes and the live-as-long-as-you-can four-player co-op challenge.

More than 20 years before the term "space marine" became a ubiquitous aspect of modern shooters, Warhammer 40,000's universe-saving badasses were already carving up hordes of uglies in Games Workshop's infamous tabletop game. While real-time strategy gamers have spent years digging into this rich sci-fi universe, many shooter fans might not know Warhammer from MC Hammer. THQ's *Space Marine* hopes to rectify this by turning the property into a franchise that'll finally please the trigger-pulling masses.

Space Marine trades cerebral tabletop strategizing for over-the-top third-person action. The result is a surprisingly solid shooter that successfully mines the most appealing aspects of the Warhammer universe—namely, reducing armies of ugly green-skins into chunky piles of blood and bone. Its dual-pronged ranged and melee combat closely recalls the shooting-and-slicing approach of Xbox exclusive *Gears of War*, but its lack of a cover system gives it an addictive vibe all its own.



As the lore goes, Space Marines are towering, several-hundred pound hulks whose thick armor is fused with their bodies. Since they take the whole run-and-gun thing so literally, they depend on their up-close weapons as much as their distance death-dealers. This means experiencing an engaging, equally balanced blend of fast-paced shooting and visceral melee action. Carving through a carotid artery with a buzzing blade is as common as filling foes full of holes.

This approach is further complemented by *Space Marine's* inspired take on health rejuvenation. Rather than relying on med packs or regenerating meters, players must go toe-to-toe with a green meanie in order to replenish their life juice. Enemies are stunned with a tap of the Triangle button, then executed with a Circle input. This move not only boosts health but also delivers a slo-mo, screen-filling bloodbath.

The game also does a fantastic job of doling out new toys. Just when we began tiring of sniping baddies with the Lascannon, we came upon the Meltagun, which vaporizes adversaries on contact.

Space Marine sports some cool visual touches, but its presentation falls shy of the top shooters' slick production values and its camera becomes a bit over-caffeinated during close-quarters combat. Still, such small gripes shouldn't keep shooter fans away from a worthwhile romp.

MATT CABRAL

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** THQ
Dev Relic Entertainment
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like the *StarCraft* marines are sick of managing resources.

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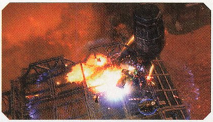
Renegade Ops

Format **PSN** Pub **Sega** Dev **Avalanche Studios** Price **$14.99** ESRB **Teen**



When cheesy '80s action flicks dream of being chaotic top-down, twin-stick shooters with motion-comic cutscenes, they dream about being *Renegade Ops*. After selecting one of four Renegades (each equipped with its own unique abilities like EMP and air support), we proceeded to blow sh–t up and generally wreak havoc. The abilities are nicely balanced so we never felt too overpowered, though leveling up and upgrading our abilities made later enemies easier to deal with. While not particularly exceptional, the game offers easily accessible entertainment. It's brief and lacks of anything more thoughtful than "F–ck yeah! Explosions!" but that simply adds to the action movie charm. **ANNE LEWIS**

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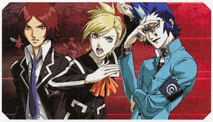
Persona 2 Innocent Sin

Format **PSP** Pub **Atlus** Dev **Atlus** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Teen**



Thanks to its modern-day setting and the well-written (and occasionally humorous) interactions between its characters, *Innocent Sin* is far more interesting than the standard RPG fare. There's a foreboding atmosphere that lingers through the mystery-filled plot, which really helped sustain our interest, and its battle system allows for all sorts of strategy. Earning and leveling up new spell-casting Personas and having mid-battle chats with our foes lead to engaging fights that felt like no other. The only real problem here is that the enemy encounter rate is set just high enough to be slightly irritating, but that's a very forgivable gripe. **PHIL THEOBALD**

PlayStation **9**

Air Conflicts Secret Wars

Format **PS3** Pub **Kalypso Media** Dev **Games Farm** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Teen**

Air Conflicts: Secret Wars features a female pilot struggling to make a living during WWII, but really, the plot is just a side note. The real focus? Shooting down Nazi planes, which, despite the generic search-and-destroy objectives and repetitive stealth-and-rescue missions, is as enjoyable as ever. The performance of the planes can seem slow and annoying, but it's not entirely out of place given the 1940s-era aircraft. Plus, plane upgrades dispersed throughout the game eased our frustrations. The budget price is nice, but all that's keeping *Secret Wars* from feeling like a PSN title are its decent length and online dogfighting options. **ANNE LEWIS**

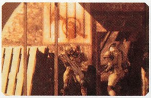
PlayStation **6**

DLC Roundup

Mortal Kombat DLC Warrior Bundle

Price **$14.99** ESRB **Mature**

Is the usual *Kombat* roster not hot enough? Get a quick and dirty fix with this downloadable fighter four-pack. While Skarlet, Kenshi, and Rain are worthy warriors, the real shining light in this DLC is horror icon Freddy Krueger. Unleash a torrent of nightmare-induced doom!



Red Faction: Armageddon Path to War

Price **$6.99** ESRB **Mature**

Short and to the point, this quartet of missions is brimming with explosive destruction. A mix of on-foot and vehicle encounters offer some cool new weapons that let us blast foes with sprays of debris using the shard gun or impale them with a handy bolt thrower.

Download of the Month

Dragon Age II Legacy

Price $9.99 **ESRB** Mature

With the Hawke family under attack by a gang of thugs hell-bent on harvesting blood for secret and dark aims, this story-driven DLC (intended for higher level characters) packs a strong narrative punch and enough gripping action to back it up. Venturing deep into a dangerous, decrepit Grey Warden to go toe-to-toe with an ancient evil offers a thrilling climax to this potent expansion.

X-Men First Class

First class all the way

Info

Price $39.99
Creators Matthew Vaughn, Ashley Miller, Zack Stentz, Jane Goldman
Starring James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Kevin Bacon, Rose Byrne, Jennifer Lawrence, January Jones
Rated PG-13
Extras Deleted and extended scenes, 10 Marvel X-Men digital comic books, making-of featurettes, BD-Live Portal.

Kick-Ass was proof that director Matthew Vaughn can take the superhero genre into uncharted and enthralling territory. With *X-Men: First Class*, Vaughn firmly assures his place as a master of the genre. The movie brilliantly mixes a 1960s-era spy thriller with mutant superpowers to create a gorgeous, entertaining, and intelligent X-Men origin story.

James McAvoy and Michael Fassbender are in fine form portraying, respectively, a young Charles Xavier and Erik Lehnsherr meeting for the first time and coming to terms with a world where other mutants exist. Seeing Xavier as a young man whose pursuits include womanizing and boozing, and whose narrow-sightedness causes as much harm as good is a fantastic contrast to the straight-laced, ethically driven Professor X that most in the audience are familiar with. Erik's transformation from a man obsessed with finding the Nazi that killed his family into Magneto is played out in a realistic fashion, and it's easy to see how these two men—both rivals and friends—grow into their future roles.

Charles and Erik are *First Class*' focus, and as is so often the case, the rest of the first generation X-Men and the villainous Hellfire club (lead by Kevin Bacon, as the gleefully amoral Sebastian Shaw) seem a little left behind. The various Xavier-lead characters are given enough screen time to get to know them at least superficially, but the villains are mostly there to show off the cool special effects and exciting action sequences.

Mystique is given a surprising amount of value in the plot, however, which is an intriguing twist, but other mutants just seem like strange choices. The relatively new comic book character, Darwin, is mostly wasted, and Angel Salvadore (the lovely Zoe Kravitz) seems included purely as an obvious plot mechanic. January Jones, as Emma Frost, looks almost lost in her role.

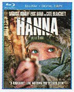
Such gripes are minor given how superb the movie is as a whole. *First Class* is more than good enough to help wash away the awful taste of the last movie, and we hope this is the start of a truly original new trilogy.

The Blu-ray also comes equipped with a fine set of extras, including an in-depth making-of documentary, and an array of digital comic books. **JASON D'APRILE**

PlayStation The Official Magazine
8

Hanna

Action thriller meets art film



Info

Price $34.98 **Creators** Joe Wright, Seth Lochhead **Starring** Saoirse Ronan, Eric Bana, Cate Blanchett **Rated** PG-13 **Extras** Deleted scenes, alternate ending, commentary, making-of short.

If there was ever a movie that instructs on the use of subtext and allegory in filmmaking, *Hanna* is it. At first glance, this looks like an obnoxious teenage action novel-turned-movie, but that would be selling this mesmerizing film short. *Hanna* is a chase movie about a teenage girl raised to become a master assassin by her ex-CIA agent father, played by an intense Eric Bana.

Hanna is essentially an innocent child—albeit, a deadly one—at the center of a maelstrom of death and paranoia. She's been raised in isolation and has no concept of anything beyond surviving and killing. Unfortunately, nearly everyone she comes into contact with ends up being sucked into the violence inflicted by her obsessed father, or his former boss—the despicably psychotic Marissa (played to creepy effect by Cate Blanchett).

The script is solid, the action sequences gritty and intense, and the pacing is excellent. Marissa is almost cartoonish in her vileness, and her sadistic German henchmen act as if they moonlight as *SNL*-like Sprockets. Saoirse Ronan, as Hanna, is utterly believable and pulls out one of the best child-actor performances since Chloe Moretz in *Let Me In*.

There's a stunning artistic quality to *Hanna*. The story is told like a modern Grimm's Fairytale (with heavy *Alice in Wonderland* overtones) and the camera work and cinematography are frequently used to convey Hanna's confusion and fear. In a world full of cookie-cutter action films, *Hanna's* distinct foreignness makes it utterly absorbing.

Unlike most attempts to merge art and mainstream, however, *Hanna's* story is largely logical and satisfying, and it has a great ending. The extras are decent, but it's a shame that the commentary is so shallow since the movie is thought-provoking and layered. For those looking for a deep action flick, *Hanna* is highly recommended. JD

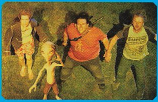
PlayStation The Official Magazine 8

Blu-ray Roundup

Dexter: Season 5

Price $64.99 **Rated** TV-MA

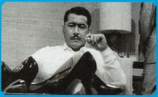
Given last season's shocking ending, *Dexter*—both the show and the character—seems a little lost this year. The show is still riveting, fantastic TV, but it's hard to say how much longer the series can keep up its serial-killer-of-the-season motif. Regardless, we'll be watching till the bitter end. We can't give up on our favorite kind-hearted killer just yet. 7



Paul

Price $34.98 **Rated** R/Unrated

It's great to see Simon Pegg and Nick Frost together again, especially in this hilarious ode to nerddom that leaves no sacred cow standing. It's a sci-fi road trip, buddy, romance movie for the Comic-Con-set. An ideal film for those in need of a good laugh, *Paul* is terrific fun from start to finish. 8



High and Low

Price $39.99 **Rated** Unrated

A police procedural with *Mad Men* vibes, Criterion's release of Kurosawa's lesser-known 1963 classic feels perfectly timed. Toshiro Mifune is riveting as an ethical businessman trapped in an untenable position during a child kidnapping gone awry. It's a stylish classic that deserves a new audience. 8

Priest

Price $35.99
Rated PG-13 /Unrated

Paul Bettany really needs to stay away from religion. *Priest* might not be as bad as *Legion*, but it's close. Visually cool with elements of steampunk mixed with the post-apocalypse, the movie feels like an exercise in style and effects. 5

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Olympus E-PL3

This compact (but powerful) camera sports a dual core processor so image processing and shot composition run in parallel, decreasing dead airtime after each shot. The kit option comes with both an optical viewfinder and external flash.

$700

olympusamerica.com

Sony S1

For those who prefer their tablets to be more than an iPad clone, the lightweight S1's smart wedge design makes it easy to hold with one hand, and improves viewing angles when placed face-up on a table.

$TBA

store.sony.com

Nooka Zub Zoo 40

Looking for a stylish and durable modern timepiece? The Zub Zoo 40 watch features a digital face and interchangeable polymer bands that can be mixed and matched to create a custom look.

$100

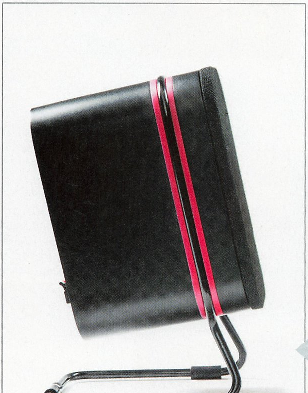
nooka.com

Sifteo Cubes

Sifteo Cubes, which began as an M.I.T. project, are blocks equipped with 1.5-inch displays to create a variety of gaming environments mixing touch, motion, and on-display content. The Creativity Kit enables users to make their own games on the fly.

$150

sifteo.com



Sonos Play:3

A passive bass "radiator" adds a surprising amount of whomp to this little shelf speaker. It requires a Sonos Bridge ($50) to work, but has cool features, like a built-in accelerometer that automatically tweaks settings when the speaker is turned on its side.

$300

sonos.com

Audyssey Lower East Side speakers

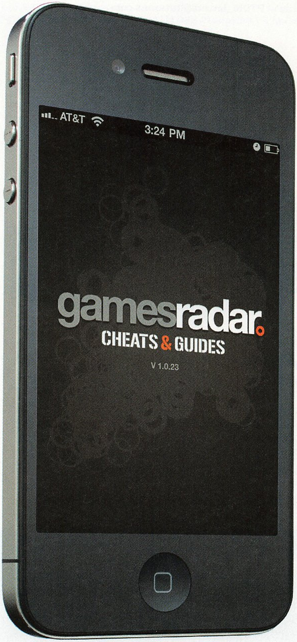
These speakers sound much bigger than they are. The lack of AirPlay support is a slight bummer, but an optical input connects nicely with Apple TV (and its competitors).

$200

audyssey.com

"★★★★★" Amazing app, and it's FREE!

by Vitsnuklz



"★★★★★ **THE BEST GUIDES** on the internet... **ALL IN ONE PLACE**"
by Samael76

"★★★★★ Thank you GamesRadar for **FEEDING MY ADDICTION**"
by Poconoscott

"★★★★★ GamesRadar is **FULL OF WIN**"
by Marcello Almaguer

"★★★★★ **AWESOMESAUCE!** Great app. I love!"
by June Martin

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PS3 | PSP | PSVITA
PlayStation Official Magazine
MAN'S LAST STAND It's us or them.
BATTLE TESTED Modern Warfare 3 Battlefield 3 Brothers in Arms 4
RESISTANCE 3
PSV from A to Z 26 REASONS TO LOVE THE VITA
EL SHADDAI Divine intervention in designer jeans
UNCHARTED 3 SLY COOPER MASS EFFECT 3 STAR TREK

You can't tell, but he's actually just shooting at a piñata. Party time!

The game length tiff endures, Vita hype builds, and My Little Pony lands a place in our hearts.

Email us at PTOM_letters@futureus.com or write to PTOM, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Ct. Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Window Shoppers Anonymous

Okay guys, what's the deal with marketing ridiculously priced gadgets and whatnot? Seriously, you've advertised a $200-300 earpiece and an even more ridiculously priced set of speakers in the mid-$2,000 range, just to name a couple of WTH prices. Who has that kind of money?! My God, buying a $300 PS3 was a big enough chunk of money, and the people who make these things seem to think it wasn't! Can you guys afford this stuff? Or do you just like looking at neat gadgets that you know you can never have and want us to share your pain?

EDWARD THE INTERNET

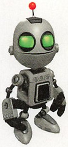
Honestly, it's a mix of the two. Sure, some of the items in our Want That section are pretty pricey, but even if most people won't want to drop that kind of cash, it's kind of fun to know what's out there, right? This is just our way of highlighting a few select gadgets that we think will appeal to our audience. And to be fair, we do refer to the products on that page as "lust-have stuff." Of course, we don't have to worry about the prices. We make magazine money, Edward.

Un-consolable

Your *Ninja Gaiden 3* issue [August 2011] talks about the PS Vita and some of the games coming with it. I think this device looks pretty cool, but I was never really into portable gaming. Portable consoles and their games were never really as good as consoles like the PS3. Shouldn't Sony invest more time into improving the PS3 or making a PS4?

JEFF THE INTERNET

Who says they aren't?



Platformers

What happened to the cosmic balance between good and evil? Lately there seems to be a thousand sandbox games, car games, and shooters but very few new/good platformers. Granted we have *LittleBigPlanet* and *Ratchet & Clank*, but what happened to *Jak and Daxter*, *Sly Cooper*, *Crash Bandicoot*, or maybe something new. I'm just tired of the same old s!%#. Bring back the fun!

SPITTENRED THE INTERNET

My Little Restraining Order

Dear Princess Celest…er, PTOM. Seeing as how you guys [excluding Gary] seem to take to cute things, I have to ask: *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, yay or neigh [*sic*]? [If you haven't seen it, please watch some episodes online before you give your verdict.]

SLENDERMAN THE INTERNET

Slenderman, you had us worried there for a minute. At first we thought you were just being silly, but when we realized you were asking a serious question, we got a little creeped out. Then we gave the show a chance and realized how it might have earned its surprisingly old [and male] cult following. Let's just say that it's no Yo Gabba Gabba!, *but we uncomfortably approve of* Friendship is Magic.

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.

We hear you, Red, but all is not lost! Both Heroes on the Move *and* The Sly Collection *recently launched on PS3, and* Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One *will be out in October. Plus, the highly anticipated* Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time *is headed our way in 2012. In the meanwhile, PSN games like* Limbo *and* Outland *should scratch your platformer itch with style!*

Game On (and On and On)

I just wanted to comment on how much I love *Dead Space 2's* New Game+ mode! During my first playthrough, the Necromorphs had the upper hand, but now I hunt them down relentlessly! I love the idea of being able to carry my game progress into new games. This same concept hooked me on *Diablo II* for years. My question to you guys is, what other games have this mode? I must own them.

JJ NORTH CAROLINA

There really isn't anything more satisfying than blowing away low-level jerks with high-powered weaponry, is there? Here are a few more titles with similar options: Demon's Souls, Borderlands, Mass Effect 2, Metal Gear Solid 4, Resident Evil 5, *and* 3D Dot Game Heroes. *Enjoy!*

Port-able

Just wondering, with the PlayStation Vita having two touchscreens, any news on some iPad ports or older game updates? *Game Dev Story* and *Tiny Wings* look wicked fun. These would be awesome ports, and I'm sure there are many more with a touchscreen. I can't see something like this *not* happening.

JUSTIN LUCIER CANADA

It's entirely possible that we'll see a few ports, but personally, we're way more excited to see how developers implement the Vita's touchscreen capabilities into new, high-profile Vita (and potentially, PS3) games. And don't forget about PSP Minis! They may not be identical to the iPhone games you know and love, but there are plenty of similarly addictive, accessible titles available for cheap.

Vital Signs

Just wanted to let you know that I saw how you replaced the PS2 logo with a PS Vita logo on the cover of the September issue. I am officially 10 times more exited about the new handheld than I was five minutes ago. Does this mean that you will begin previewing PS Vita games soon? And more importantly, can you get me one for my birthday?

YOSEF THE INTERNET

Are you kidding? You didn't even invite us to your party last year! You get nothing for your birthday. Nothing!

Quality Not Quantity

I wanted to throw in my two cents on the game length debate and say that I completely disagree with Michael Longwill's letter that was printed in issue 49 [September 2011]. Since when does a game's length determine its enjoyability? I usually enjoy short (6-10 hours), action-packed games rather than long, drawn-out games, and I'd rather have a great game end too soon than drag on for too long. To use Michael's example of *L.A. Noire*, I found it to be mundane, repetitive, and overly long. I actually quit playing halfway through. I only play single-player campaigns, and games like *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, *Uncharted 2*, *Heavy Rain*, and *God of War III* have been well worth the $60 I paid for each of them. The only factor that determines a game's worth for me is whether or not I enjoyed it, and I have only felt cheated by games that artificially extended their length with fluff and fetch quests.

PAUL S FORT MEYERS, FL

Ask Ryan

Q Okay, I love your magazine, but it only comes once a month and I don't want to wait four weeks just to get another taste of that sweet PTOM goodness. Why don't you guys do more stuff online?

RICH
THE INTERNET

Actually, we're one step ahead of you, Rich. We've recently started experimenting with different kinds of video content, offering commentary over gameplay videos that we post on YouTube. This content will evolve and mature over time, but we feel it's a good start. Subscribe to our YouTube channel at http://bit.ly/pibcIr or scan the QR code below to check it out!

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

Audi RS5

"There's no way I can afford it, but sometimes you just have to dream. Keep your BMWs, Porsches, and supercar exotics, the 450 horsepower, all-wheel drive RS5 is all the car I would ever need."

ROGER BURCHILL

David Comes to Life

"An ambitious, nearly over-the-top rock opera, F_cked Up's latest full-length clocks in at a daunting 78 minutes but never lets up for a second. It's an amazing example of how a hardcore band can mature with style."

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Breaking Bad

Breaking Bad

"There's something unnerving about watching a man resort to drug trafficking in hopes of securing his family's financial future after being diagnosed with cancer—but I can't stop watching."

RYAN TALJONICK

Louis

"Take Seinfeld and make him fat, divorced and 40-something. Take away his friends but give him two young daughters. Make him grossly inappropriate and shoot mostly at night in New York City. Louis CK writes, directs and plays a guy named Louis CK. Darkly hilarious, and sad."

KEN BOUSQUET

PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

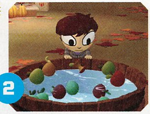
BEST FULL GAMES

Creepy Crawly Platformer

Limbo

Limbo may have taken its time coming to PSN, but it was worth the wait. The game melds simple controls with supremely challenging gameplay and a beautiful, but chilling, aesthetic. It's the rare game where we die often but never feel frustrated about it.

10 Pub **Playdead**
Dev **Playdead**

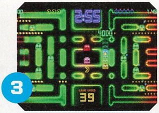


Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by Tim Schafer's humor.

9 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

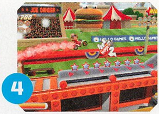


Retro Revival

Pac-Man Championship Ed.

There'll always be a place in our hearts for gaming's gluttonous yellow goober—but nostalgia be damned, this retro homage offers a whole new frenetic take on the classic gameplay.

9 Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Namco Bandai**



Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

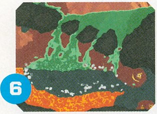
9 Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

Featuring alien and rock blasting galore, the fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair that taxes both our mind and our reflexes.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

Lettuce Defend Ourselves

Plants vs. Zombies

This ubiquitous tower defense game has made the platform rounds, but there's no denying its insidious charms and eternal goofiness. Hours will be spent meticulously maintaining the grid-like lawn in an attempt to fend off the rampaging waves of groaning, brain-chomping zombies.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **PopCap Games**

Role-playing Puzzler

Might & Magic Clash of Heroes

Don't overlook *Heroes* with its throwback 2D visuals and turn-based battle system—the RPG-flavored puzzle action requires stacking creatures for attacks and building walls for defense. It may look and play old school, but it's still mighty fun and magically challenging.

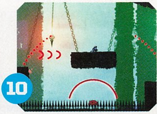
9 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Capybara Games**

Dolled-Up Adventure

Stacking

Double Fine games come chock full of personality and charm. Using babushka dolls to solve puzzles and explore a '30s Depression-era-esque world of miniature mannequins may not seem all that compelling, but it is. This is a fine argument for Double Fine to make more PSN titles.

8 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



Beat-'em-up Platformer

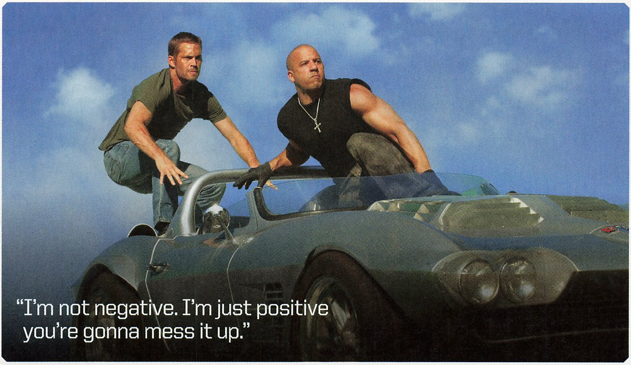
Outland

Outland offers a new twist on action platformers with its polarity-swapping mechanic: Switch between light and dark personas to deflect like-colored bullets and interact with like-colored platforms. Distinctive visuals enhance the beat-'em-up combat and projectile avoidance gameplay.

8 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Housemarque**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

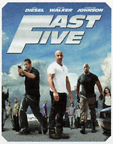
What we're downloading to our PS3 this month



"I'm not negative. I'm just positive you're gonna mess it up."

Party like a Rock Star

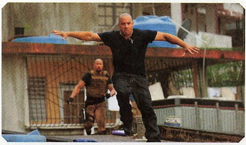
Music Unlimited is offering the chance for you and four friends to see KORN in New York City or alternatively, a yet to be announced artist in Los Angeles. The winner's group will also enjoy their own personal After Party with the band following the show. Out-of-town winners receive travel and hotel accommodations. To enter, visit the Sony Entertainment Network Facebook page (facebook.com/sonyentertainment), click the "Music Unlimited Concert Tickets and After Party Sweepstakes" tab to the left and enter by 10/14/11. Winners will be announced 10/28/11. Not a Music Unlimited subscriber? Learn how to enjoy a free 30-Day premium trial at munlimited.com.



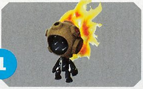
Fast Five

ETA **Oct 4** Rated **PG-13** Genre **Crime / Drama** Studio **Universal Pictures**

Something about *The Fast and the Furious* franchise scratches our itch for flashy autos and breakneck speed. The latest entry to the series, *Fast Five*, follows the events of *Fast & Furious* as Mia Toretto and Brian O'Conner bust free Dom Toretto from his transport bus en route to a U.S. prison. Of course, the team get themselves in all sorts of shenanigans that involve car theft, high-stakes racing, and a huge pile o' cash.



BEST FREE STUFF



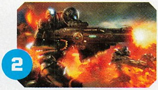
1

Shower Power

LittleBigPlanet 2 Perseids costume

Time for some Sackboy cosplay. Celebrate the majestic beauty of the deep cosmos with this oh-so-cute Perseids costume. It's a great fashion-forward way to celebrate the annual meteor shower: by pretending to be one.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Media Molecule**



2

Extreme Prejudice

Section 8: Prejudice wallpapers

This trio of cinematic wallpapers inspires us to be dropped from space into the middle of an intense planetary firefight—battle suit and all. Oh, we suppose we could try diplomacy, but what fun would that be?

Pub **TimeGate Studio**
Dev **TimeGate Studios**

3

Crash Cow

MotorStorm Apocalypse Ace of Spades

A huge prize of 120,000 chips creates some strong incentive to burn through the six all-new single-player races in this free event pack, but fair warning: this intense challenge is not easily bested.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Evolution Studios**

4

Vita Vitals

PlayStation Vita wallpaper

Some may slather hard bodies over their XMB, but we're all about the hardware. Waiting for Sony's newest handheld system to launch may be agonizing, but gazing deeply at its design will tide us over.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCEA**

5

Nasal Attraction

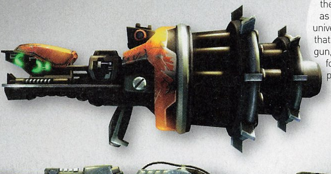
Axe Excite dynamic theme

Imagine having to waft virtual aromas to attract heavenly angels (clad, oddly, in skimpy attire) to hang out on our PS3s. This dynamic theme from Axe has us covered so we don't have to...exude strange odors.

Pub **Axe**
Dev **Axe**

Firepower

PlayStation's most ridiculously powerful and stylish guns



RYNO V

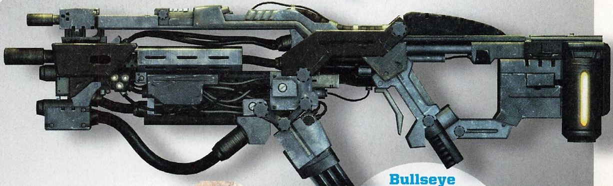
Ratchet & Clank

The RYNO (which stands for Rip You a New One) has appeared in all the *Ratchet & Clank* games. Described as "the deadliest weapon in the known universe," it's an immensely powerful gun that's part rocket launcher, part machine gun, part shotgun, and 100 percent death for anything not behind us when we pull the trigger. In *A Crack In Time* it even plays the "1812 Overture" when fired. Classy!

211-V Plasma Cutter

Dead Space 2

The 211-V is actually a mining tool used for cutting rocks. However, when engineer Isaac Clarke encounters undead alien Necromorphs on the doomed *USG Ishimura*, he finds its cutting abilities handy for pruning the flailing limbs of the monsters pursuing him. It fires lethal slicing blasts of energy and can cut vertically or horizontally. Versatile.



Bullseye

Resistance

Essentially a homing machine gun, the Chimeran Bullseye can fire a "tag" shot that causes every other bullet to zero in on the first round. Great for clipping a Chimera and watching streams of bullets curve through the air and pepper the enemy wherever they hide—get on the other end of it in multiplayer, though, and it's game over. The basic Bullseye fires orange bullets, but there's also a more lethal Bullseye Mk II, which fires blue ammo.

Ebony and Ivory

Devil May Cry

Dante's trusty pistols were heavily customized by master gunsmith Nell Goldstein and bare the inscription "For Tony Redgrave By .45 Art Warks." Tony Redgrave is one of Dante's aliases, while "Warks" is a joke referring to Goldstein's misspelled shop sign. Ebony is designed for long distance targeting while Ivory is built for rapid fire—it's also a complete mirror image of its twin.

M4A1 Carbine

Every game ever

A favorite of *Metal Gear's* Snake and a *Modern Warfare 2* essential, this is a full-auto variant of the M4 Assault Rifle. Its popularity comes from the flexibility of the Special Operations Peculiar Modification, or SOPMOD, kit. This system allows for just about any modification to the rifle, like grenade launchers and ACOG, reflex, and laser sights. It's all the rifle we really need.

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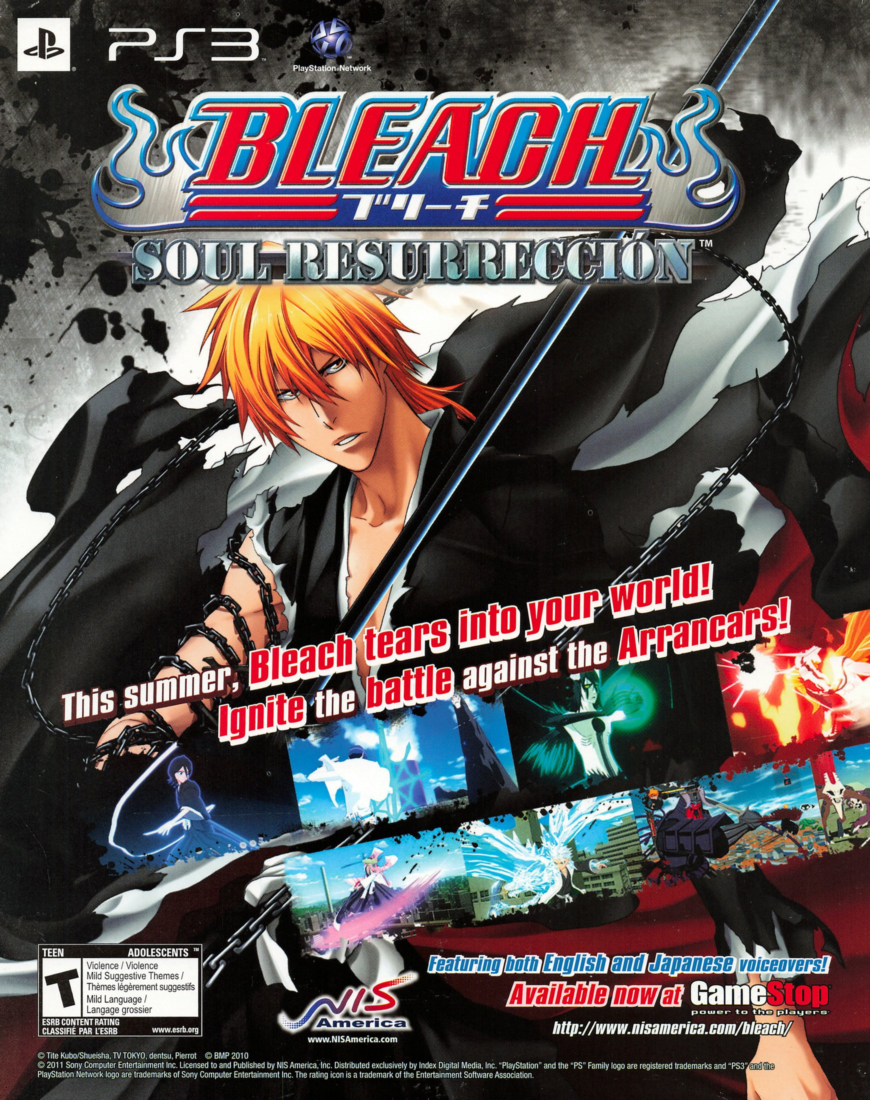
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